OPEN ACCESS

University of BRISTOL

This electronic thesis or dissertation has been downloaded from Explore Bristol Research, http://research-information.bristol.ac.uk

Author:
Adeolu Adegbola, E. A

Title:
IFA and Christianity among the Yoruba : A study in symbiosis and in the development of Yoruba Christology, 1890-1940

General rights
Access to the thesis is subject to the Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International Public License. A copy of this may be found at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode This license sets out your rights and the restrictions that apply to your access to the thesis so it is important you read this before proceeding.

Take down policy
Some pages of this thesis may have been removed for copyright restrictions prior to having it been deposited in Explore Bristol Research. However, if you have discovered material within the thesis that you consider to be unlawful e.g. breaches of copyright (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please contact collections-metadata@bristol.ac.uk and include the following information in your message:

• Your contact details
• Bibliographic details for the item, including a URL
• An outline nature of the complaint

Your claim will be investigated and, where appropriate, the item in question will be removed from public view as soon as possible.

BEST COPY

AVAILABLE

TEXT IN ORIGINAL IS
CLOSE TO THE EDGE OF
THE PAGE

IFÁ AND CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE YÒRÙBÁ : A STYUDY IN SYMBIOSIS AND IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YÒRÙBÁ CHRISTOLOGY, 1890-1940.

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL
IN PART FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Rev. E.A.ADEOLU ADÉGBỌLA, B.D.(Lond.), S.T.M.(UTS.,New York).

September,1976.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGES

V. NOTES ON YORUBA ORTHOGRAPHY.

1. The mid-tone. In the text,(pp.1-317),the tone on every syllable is marked,"including the mid-tone", according to Convention iii and the reccommendation thereon : Report of the Yoruba Orthography Committee, Ministry of Education, Ibadan,1969,page 6; also pp. 2-3.

2. Double Vowels and relevant Tone marks. The use of the tilde in the old orthography is now generally discontinued. In its place, double vowels are used with the appropriate tone marks,acute or grave. (Report,page 5,section 11; also R.C. Abraham, Dictionary,pp.xiff. It is necessary to call attention here to two issues in this regard:

a) Is Aladura to be written as Aláàdúrà or as Aládùúrà? Many people write it as Àladura without any tone marks. However, as spoken, the lengthening seems to fall on the u. But since the prefix alá- is formed from the first vowel of àdúrà with the grave tone, it seems natural to double the a-. This is the form used by R.C.Abraham in his famous Dictionary. Alternatively, the single vowel may be marked with a double accent, thus Alâdúrà.

b) However, the tilde in the old orthography answered not only for tones but also for elision (the compression or suppression of particular vowels or diphthongs). Amọ̀mọ̀tan or Amọ̀imọ̀tan is from àmọ̀-àimọ̀-tán (to know but not to know fully). Should this word be written as Amọ̀ọmọ̀tan, the negative particle become lost and a wrong root-word is suggested -ọmọ̀tán. Similarly, ìdawọ̀ comes from ìda- and ìwọ̀. The vowel before the second word is elided. If we write ìdaàwọ̀, the original root-word, ìwọ̀, is made to become àwọ̀. Ìdaìwọ̀ is patently better. But this is what was previously abbreviated in speech to ìdawọ̀. A similar problem is found with Egbọ̀gi which comes from Egbọ̀-igi(the roots of trees). To write Egbọ̀ọgi (the roots of ọgi) misleads Another example is màdárìkàn when written as mààdárìkàn (mà-àdá-rì-kàn). Once again, the double accent seems to be a better device, even in spite of the printer's need for new accents!

ÌFÁ AND CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE YÒRÙBÁ: A STUDY IN SYMBIOSIS AND IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YÒRÙBÁ CHRISTOLOGY, 1890-1940

Rev. E. A. Adeolu Adegbola.

SYNOPSIS

Problem

The problem taken up in this thesis is posed by the discovery that when a Yòrùbá convert backslides from Christianity, he does not revert to a cult of Ólódùmarè whom Prof. Idowu has presented as the theos of Yòrùbá belief. Rather, he returns to some cosmobiological practices and devices directed towards the amelioration of the human situation. This study examines both the cultic practices and beliefs to which backsliders revert and the adaptations of Christianity made by those who remain in the Christian fold.

Methods

The study is based on field-study and interviews supplemented with research in libraries and archives.

The treatment involves an evaluation of methods for studying religion and for comparing religions. A historical and word study leads to the discovery of two concepts of religion. The first, described as the Òró-concept, concentrates on established practices by which individuals and communities are enabled to face the contradictions, dilemmas and tensions of life. The other, denoted as the Ìsìn-concept, devotes itself to belief in God and the worship of Him. Yòrùbá traditional religion belongs primarily to the first category. The Christianity brought by the European missionaries belongs to the second. There has been an interaction between the two concepts. It is found that an appropriate starting-point for the study of popular religion is the human condition and situation (Ch. I).

Over against the ethnological assumptions of a static time frame which underly other Yòrùbá studies (Farrow, Parrinder, Lucas, Idowu, et al.), a historical study of traditional religion is introduced. Following the example of the anthropologist Evans-Pritchard and the historian Terence Ranger, developments in religion are related to socio-political changes and vice versa (Ch. II/1-3).

Ifá is shown to be the core and summation of Yoruba religion (Ch. II/4-5). An analysis of the structure of Ifá myths and rituals provides us with a typology of religion. Its components are: divination, medicine, prayer, ritual and morality. These elements are shown to be indicative of particular cosmological views. They also fulfil in every case some recognisable human needs. For this reason, they are described as "pragmatic tools of existentialism" (Ch. II/6).

The study also includes a critical description of the introduction of Christianity into Yorubaland and of the attempts at indigenization by the Aládúrà, their immediate predecessors and others (Chs. III-VI).

The elements of primal religion are found to be identifiable even in the personal religious life of the early missionaries (Ch. IV/1b). The same elements are also found under new forms in the Christianity of the Yòrùbá within both the longer established churches of missionary origin and the so-called independent churches of local origin. The historical changes and developments which introduced the new forms took place primarily during the period 1890-1940 which is the second half-century of Christianity among the Yòrùbá (Ch. VI).

Conclusion.

The concluding chapter further develops the typology of religion and establishes the relation in religion between, on the one hand, God and man, and on the other society and the individual. It indicates that the need still remains in the Yòrùbá situation for the process of religious change, and of the indigenization of Christianity in particular, to become in a more dynamic way both an expression and a facilitation of authentic change in all aspects of society (Ch. VII).

PREFACE

In his Foreword to E. G. Parrinder's West African Religion (1949), Edwin Smith expressed the hope that "some day Dr. Parrinder, or someone else equally competent, will follow up this study of the pagan religion with a study of the actual religion of those Africans who in various degrees of reality have accepted Christianity". Such Christians, he quickly added with his characteristic insight, could hardly be expected to have made "a complete break with the past, however much they profess to do so". That was written in September 1947.

Two years later, Dr. Parrinder himself undertook a study of 'the actuality of religion' which concentrated 'on one particular town in order to obtain a detailed and factual study'. The town chosen was the Yorùbá City of Ibadan. Religion in An African City (1953), which reported the study, treated the three religions largely in isolation from one another. Except in its careful study of polygamy and of the history of the Reformed Ògbóni Fraternity, the report did not develop a framework for examining the historical efforts 'to relate the new religion to the old'. It has generally been assumed both by scholars of the Yoruba situation and by Yoruba Christians themselves that evangelization would have some effect on the people. But the opposite question, of what effect the indigenous religion could have on the life and thought of the Christian communities, received little attention. O. Oesthuizen and J. D. Y. Peel among others, have observed that the Àlàdúrà expression of Christianity is an adaptation of the Yoruba traditional religion; but no detailed study has been made to justify this observation. In other African settings, comparable studies of the interaction of traditional religion and Christianity are being made. A few outstanding ones are S. G. Williamson's Akan Religion and the Christian Faith (1965), B. A. Pauw's Religion in a Tswana Kingdom (1960) Marshal Murphree's Christianity and the Shona (1969), E. Anderson's Churches at the Grassroot: A study in Congo-Brazzaville (1968), and E. C. O. Ilogu's Christianity and Ibo Culture (1974). Unlike some of these studies, the present work systematically shows how the full lineaments of a traditional religion, Ifa in this case, are reproduced in various versions of Christianity among the Yoruba.

In the report of the Seventh International African Seminar held in 1965 on Christianity in Tropical Africa (C. O. G. Baeta(ed.), 1968), it was stated that in India, China and Japan, "early Catholic endeavours..... deliberately developed the policy of adapting Christianity to the indigenous religions". It was also noted that developments in parts of Latin America had led to a fusion of traits of African religions with Christian belief and practice to the spiritual satisfaction of the people concerned. In contrast, there seems to have been a deliberate policy in Africa not to incorporate anything from the local religious systems into Christian religious life and thought. This study shows that the incorporation takes place all the same among the Yoruba through deliberate though unofficial adaptation, as well as through unconscious assimilation.

The treatment adopted in this presentation is deliberately interdisciplinary as required by the nature of our enquiry. An interdisciplinary approach here can be a pointer to a methodology of Religious Studies relevant to these transitional and formative days in the Yoruba Church. In each chapter, the approach of one discipline is predominant, but sometimes two disciplines overlap in a single chapter. Chapter One is a critical review of Comparative Religion, with emphasis on questions of methodological importance. Chapter Two is a study in the History of Religions, first concentrating on an examination of the interaction between religious history and socio-political history, and then taking a more decided anthropological approach to the study of the religion under examination. Chapters Three and Four are an exercise in the study of Church History. Chapter Five makes a foray into Historical Theology, concentrating on the Christology of a few individuals in the Yoruba Church. In Chapter Six, there is a return to the History of Religions in a form of phenomenology of Religion, examining in the process some pastoral issues in church life.

.../2

In a sense, I have been reflecting in much of this work on the religious life of Christians among whom I grew up and to whom I have ministered as a pastor. This personal encounter with the spiritual and psychological dilemmas of Christians who were converted to Christianity from traditional Yoruba religion has been put in the historical context of the written experiences and comments of a number of leaders of certain religious movements between 1890 and 1940.

I have interviewed a number of people concerning their own experiences as well as details of traditional religion and culture. My cousin, Jacob Akinleye, has been a great help to me in making contacts with many whom I interviewed. He also accompanied me on some of the visits. I am greatly obliged to the Rev. E. A. Lijadu of Ondo, a grandson of the late Rev. E. M. Lijadu, for making available to me manuscripts of his grandfather's records which have since been lodged in the National Archives in Ibadan. He has also put me in touch with a number of his relations, particularly his aunt Mrs. Franklin who is a daughter of the Rev. E. M. Lijadu. Among others who gave me assistance, special mention must be made of the Rev. O. Osilade and other leaders of the Ethiopian National Church in Ibadan and Ile-Ife, of officers of the Ijo Orunmila Adolawo in Lagos and Okun-Owa, as also of Mrs. Beyioku, Mr. Ladipo Osiga and Patriarch D. O. Epega.

Part of the research was done in missionary archives in London. To Miss Keen, the archivist of the Church Missionary Society, and to the Rev. Paul Ellingworth of the Methodist Missionary Society, my thanks are due.

I am particularly indebted to Prof. Kenneth Grayston and the Rev. F. B. Welbourn for their encouragement and gracious friendship. But for the academic guidance and supervision of Mr. Welbourn, the conceptual framework of this study would have been weaker. Although I am not unaware of how his more psycho-analytical approach could lead to new insights into the areas under investigation, I have decided to restrict myself to the more familiar levels of dynamism and functionalism. All the same, my debt to him is immense. Rev. Dr. John Kent was kind enough to read an earlier draft of the chapters on Church History and offered very valuable advice. Rev. Dr. Walter Davis of the University of Ibadan also read at short notice a number of other chapters before the final typing and advised me on my literary style.

For financial assistance, my thanks are due to the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches and to the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. I am obliged to the Institute of Church and Society in Ibadan for providing me with a base as a Research Associate during the period of my field study. None of these bodies in any way dictated the direction of my work and cannot be held responsible for any religious or pastoral implications of the analysis, I have to thank also the typists at the Institute of Church and Society who typed earlier drafts of the manuscript.

Wills Hall, Bristol, provided me with a home away from home during the academic session of 1970-71. To Mr. W. Sloane, the Warden, and to other members of the Senior Common Room, my thanks are due for their friendship and fellowship. Finally, my wife Sola deserves every praise and gratitude for her moral support all along and for bearing alone our family responsibilities during my frequent absences from home.

Institute of Church and Society,
I b a d a n,
September, 1976.

E. A. Adeolu Adegbola.

I. COMPARATIVE RELIGION

"As a theologian, I see a task before us which consists in raising a question about the relations of the 'great Religions' to each other in another form than is customary when they are set alongside each other as a specie of one genus, that genus being 'faith' usually in the meaning of world view. Do they indeed represent alternative solutions to the same problem, or are they, in their historical beginnings at least, answers to different questions, cures for different evils? Is it perhaps true that the Judaeo-Christian movement is fundamentally directed toward the reconstruction of human faith as fidelity-trust in universal community, while Islam, though not irrelevant to the trust-fidelity-treason-distrust pattern of life, is directed primarily toward something else, and Buddhism to still another human dilemma. At all events, I question that the easy use of the word 'faith' in contrasting the 'faiths of mankind' with each other does justice either to the uniqueness of Christianity or to the meaningfulness of other orientations of men in the universe, other forms of monotheim or monism".

H.R. Niebuhr in Sydney Hook's symposium
Religious Experience and Truth, New York,
New York University Press, 1961, p. 102.

I. COMPARATIVE RELIGION

1. ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND THE COMPARISON OF RELIGIONS

In the study of a traditional religion such as that of the Yoruba, there is always the temptation, which must be resisted, to transfer without question the criteria of adherence, belief and practice familiar in another religion which is regarded as a developed or World Religion.

Because our undertaking in this thesis is to explore the interaction between Christianity as a world religion on the one hand and what has come to be described as Traditional Religion among the Yoruba on the other, it will be especially useful at this stage to give some careful attention to the whole question of definitions in Comparative Religion.

Anthropologists are at last pleading for that objectivity in the study of religions which was absent and impossible in the colonial era. At that time, anthropological studies had to be sponsored and financed by colonial governments whose ultimate purpose was to govern and control,(1) and who needed to justify that control. The pejorative use of the term "primitive" to describe the religious systems of African peoples then being brought under the protection, trusteeship or colonial government of European imperial powers was plain evidence of this lack of objectivity.

Until recently, European scholars of African Traditional Religions have found great difficulty in divesting themselves of the racial assumptions which accompanied colonial rule established in Africa in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Even now, there are still Europeans who find it hard to set aside such

---

1. Godfrey Lienhardt, in the Second Malinowski Lecture, in 1961. Kathleen Gough, "Anthropology: Child of Imperialism" in Monthly Review, Vol. 19, No. 11. A sharp but detailed criticism of the assumptions and colonial ideology of Malinowski has been made in a paper presented to the IXth International Congress of Anthropological Science, Chicago, August-September, 1973 by O.F. Onoge of the University of Ibadan. "The Counterrevolutionary Tradition in African Studies: The Case of Applied Anthropology", The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies, Vol. 15, No. 3, November 1973, pp. 325-345. Lucy Mair appears to be replying to this paper in her "Anthropology and Colonial Policy," African Affairs: Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol. 74/295, April 1975, pp. 191-195.

assumptions which usage has established and which biological, psychological and even theological arguments have in the past been called to support. We agree with Mary Douglas[2]: it is not so much that the term "primitive" needs to be dropped, but that a clear and rigorous redefinition of the term needs to be pursued.

Missionaries, of course, did not need and never attempted to hide the fact that their study of other peoples' religions was to enable them to discover appropriate methods of evangelisation and proselytization. It is here primarily that lack of objectivity has greatly affected the method of studying and of analysing traditional religions.

For any objective study of the religion of a people, what is important is not the definition of terms used by the scholar, but the definitions as held and understood by the people themselves. The view held by the scholar himself, either according to his own religions belief or by academic conviction, will in all probability assert itself at one point or another. But the primary task of the scholar dealing with another culture is to discover and describe as accurately as possible the views held by the people themselves. This has not always happened; and the descriptions of Yoruba religion which are available cannot be said to have been uninfluenced by the understanding of religion inherited from an alien culture.

Dr. Parrinder wrote in 1961, "It may be quite misleading to transfer ideas and categories from European to African theology"[3]. Since then, so much has been written about African religion and theology that has transgressed this canon of research and formulation that it appears the time has come for the subjunctive to be changed to an indicative. It is definitely misleading to transfer concepts

---

2. Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger, Pelican 1970, pp. 112f.

3. E.G. Parrinder, West African Religion, revised edition, 1961, p. 23.

and categories from European theological formulations to African theology. Also, to assume that the analytic system which has been used in sounding the depths of a European religious experience would apply without modification to an African religion is wrong. It is necessary therefore to look at some illustrations which show the practical impropriety of taking concepts and definitions from one religious system and applying them indiscriminately to the study of another religious system.

(a) Evolutionary assumptions

The use of such terms as animism, magic, fetichism, or even "primitive" in reference to the religion of the Yoruba and of other West African peoples has been rightly criticised(4). The use of these terms came into prominence during the period of the search for the origins of religion by an earlier generation of historians of religion. In that search, an evolutionary scale was constructed, and subsequent studies have placed various religions at different points on that scale.

According to the value-judgement in the evolutionary interpretation of history, the religions of primitive people had failed to evolve and were therefore at the bottom of the evolutionary scale. It was also believed that religions having the notion of God were at the top of the evolutionary ladder. In this context, it has been felt that to say or to accept that African traditional religions have no notion of God would be to assert or admit that African religions were in truth primitive, based not only on pre-logical conceptions but also on unevolved notions which have to be swept away by the tide of evolutionary development which the European colonisers were thought to represent. Therefore it was undertaken to explain that the God-idea was present in African religions to the same extent as it was present in European religions. So, categories from the

---

4. G. Parrinder, West African Religion, Eqworth Press, London, pp. 7-12; African Traditional Religion. Hutchinson, London, 1954 and 1962, pp. 15f, E.B. Idowu, (1967) pp. 1-4, 202-4.

historical theology of the Christian faith were used to prove it.(5) This was done, first by missionaries, who had a sympathetic understanding of African religions and therefore knew that these religions were not as primitive as other scholars had made them to appear. It was undertaken also by native scholars who believed that the description of the religions as primitive was a gross mis-representation.

Thus, in the rejection, so rightly made by scholars of Yoruba religion, of terms passed down by the evolutionists, there has been an unconscious acceptance of the evolutionary scale which they laboured to reject. Surely, Parrinder reverted to the same scale when finally in his first book which we have quoted above he described West African Religion as "Polytheism". Each time, the argument ended with a "not there, but here", a use of the same evolutionary scale which they originally attempted to reject. It is time that the evolutionary scale be formally rejected in the study of traditional religious systems in Africa. This can be done without closing the door on the concepts of development and change. Change is not necessarily lineal, and development can be dialectical.

Once it had been satisfactorily established that terms originating from evolutionary theories of religion do not accurately describe Yoruba religion, the next step should have been to investigate immediately what other theories of religion might apply. But this was not done. Some of the alternative categories and methods which have been used will be briefly examined here to see how suitable they are and whether it is justifiable to use them in a study of Yoruba traditional religion, for example.

(b) <u>No tabula rasa mind</u>.

Indeed, no anthropologist or theologian comes to the study of another religion with a <u>tabula rasa</u> mind. He has his own model of reality which influences his perception. He brings into his investigation a theory which influences his collection and interpretation of data. He allows himself an openness of mind which enables the data to modify his theory. This is the dialectical process by which a scientific investigation is being done. The works of those who have protested against the

---

5. cf. J.B. Danquah, The Akan Doctrine of God, Lutterworth Press, London, 1944; E.B. Idowu, op. cit.; J.S. Mbiti, <u>Concepts of God in Africa</u>, SPCK, London, 1970.

use of evolutionary theories for the study of African religions are, as is to be expected, found to have been based on other theories which are not always explicity stated. It is better that this be acknowledged and that each scholar be expected to state clearly at one stage or another what theories he is applying to his study of other people's religion. Of course, the most expedient procedure is first to study the religion in question as objectively as possible. Then we can discuss what, in the light of the study, is the people's own explanation and interpretation of what they are doing with aspects of their life which we have chosen to describe as 'religious'.

This last phrase implies that it is still an open question as to which aspect of the life of a people we may suitably describe as 'religious'. Put in another way, it is the question of whether any part of the life of the community should be excluded from being regarded as part of religion. Who decides what is covered by the religious factor in human life and experience and what is not? Any philosopher, anthropologist or theologian who undertakes to decide this on the basis of his discipline has to make clear whether his theory, deduced from whatever consideration, can legitimately have universal application. The only way to determine this will necessarily mean a resort to anthropological empiricism in which one first puts such a theory to the test within the life of the community concerned.

Professor Evans-Pritchard has observed that it is premature at this stage to propose any general theory of African religious systems. Before this can be done, we have first to make a number of systematic studies of 'primitive' philosophies. "When that has been done, a classification can be made which possibly may lead to some general conclusions".(6)

This of course raises the fundamental problem in the scientific study of religions: What is religion? And particularly, what do we mean by religion in the case of each of the two systems before us in this thesis? To an anthropologist, a theologian, or a philosopher discussing religion, the word may mean different things. It is now evident that even to different scholars within the same discipline, different definitions may be assumed. Similarly, adherents of an 'ethnic religion' which is an integral part of a distinct national or tribal culture would understand the idea of religion

---

6. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Nuer Religion, O.U.P., 1956, pp. 314f.

differently from adherents of a world religion. Two Yoruba words, Òrò and Ìsin, will now be examined with a discussion of the theoretical issues which are related.

(2) ÒRÒ: RELIGION AS CUSTOMARY RITUALS

(a) Àsà and Òrò

One of the first marks of adherence to the Christian religion, is baptism. St. Paul's question to the Christians of Ephesus (Acts 19: 1-7) "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" has influenced doctrines of church confirmation and is tied up now with the debate on the validity of infant baptism and its relation to adult baptism. As such, in different church circles, confirmation has become another criterion of adherence, especially when it is considered as an extension and complement of the baptismal rite.

In contrast, the criterion of an initiation rite cannot be used to determine an adherent of Yoruba religion. Everybody belongs. The religion is inextricably bound up with the culture, traditions and way of life of the people as a community. Initiation is into particular cults or to specific roles in the traditional ritual system.

What we now variously describe as traditional religion, paganism, or Yoruba Heathenism was just the way of life of the people, embracing every aspect of their life, requiring the participation of all as the occasion might specify. It was custom, àsà. The phrase "country fashion" was used frequently by the early Yoruba Christians and the missionaries who worked among them.(7) It was used to represent custom, tribal ceremonies and therefore sometimes local traditional ritual systems and the practices related thereto. When the phrase was used by the native Christians, the adjective of locality emphasised the particularity of the custom being peculiarly 'our own'

---

7. See, for example, Miss Tucker, Abeokuta or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline and Progress of the Yoruba Mission, London, 1853, pp. 132, 135, 143, and Anna Hinderer, op. cit. pp. 38, 139.

way of life, our way of seeing and doing things. Àsà wa or Àsà ilè wa located the custom as being of our land, our country, our fatherland. Of course, in the usage by missionaries, the adjectival noun 'country' connoted the countryside and therefore primitivity, the original meaning of 'pagan'.

However, 'fashion' or 'custom' was too general and too broad in reference to the ritual system which the missionaries saw and described as religion. Àsà stood for casual fashion and custom the observance or non-observance of which carried no threat to life and security. For the custom which carried such a threat, the word used was Òrò. Òrò was traditional observance and behaviour made compulsory by the exgencies of life, the procedure of which was laid down variously according to the way of life of each household, clan or tribe. Each kinship and kingship had rites, routines and ceremonies which had to be gone through in connection with the joys, uncertainties and tensions of life.

There were and still are customary forms of personal behaviour and group ceremonies associated with childbirth, puberty and marriage. The naming of children and the passing out of nuptial or post-natal confinement have their respective ceremonies. Similar customary rites accompany the burying of the dead and the ending of the confinement of widows or the confinement of orphans. The arrival and departure of the annual seasons with the agricultural opportunities and risks associated with them have their appropriate rituals. Even professional skills and the hazards associated with their accompanying popularity, or with the use of dangerous instruments, are matched with rites and ceremonies peculiar and appropriate to each. With these latter, ritual observance crossed the boundaries of clans and kinship groups. The wider community or kingship becomes involved in concern and in the relevant ritual observance to ensure social security.

With the aid of symbolic actions, Òrò ceremonies seek to overcome the distinctions, separations and ambiguities of the cosmic or social life. By means of the ritualization of similarities, paradoxes and contradictions, people attempt to ensure for themselves the fertility of the earth and of womanhood, the cure and healing of personal and social illnesses, the success of hunting expeditions and agricultural undertakings. In addition to these 'instrumental' types of rites and processes, there are expressive ritual items which indicate the danger points of life or call due attention to other levels of existence and the right ordering of human society.

(b) Social security and continuity

Towards a further clarification of the issues involved in this question, we take a look here at two elements of social life which are generally treated as religion for the African situation and not usually for the European. The two chosen are secret societies and ancestor-cults.

The Ògbóni cult in Yorubaland has performed a judicial role in Yoruba society although it has initiation rites and other para-religious elements.(8) Is it to be treated as a judicial, religious or political institution? A look at a comparable social phenomenon in contemporary English society may make the issue clearer. There was a broadcast interview between a radio interviewer and the United Kingdom Conservative Minister for Home Affairs over the expulsion in 1971 of Rudi Dutschke, the German revolutionary student leader who had been permitted by the previous Labour Government to stay in England. Whenever it became necessary for the Minister to

---

8. This view has been variously reiterated by different social anthropologists, notable among whom are W. Bascom, "The sociological role of the Yoruba Cult-group", Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, LXIII, 1944, pp. 75f. Peter Morton-Williams, "The Yoruba Ogboni Cult in Oyo", Africa, XXX/4, 1960, pp. 362f.

defend the expulsion order or to justify his refusal to answer any particular questions in the interview, the Minister constantly used some such phrase as "If we are going to have an effective security service in this country....." The interviewer was sharp in his probings. Every other statement made by the Minister was questioned by the interviewer. What was left completely unchallenged was the assumption of the need for an effective security service. Both interviewer and interviewee seemed to have agreed about that need. The implication for personal freedom, of course, was the main contention which led to that interview as it had led to a number of student protests and demonstrations during the previous weeks.

The security service is the British politically-necessitated secret society, created by Government itself, maintained by government funds and permitted by the law of the land to function secretly. It has its own rituals and symbols and pass-words; the plain-clothes policeman carrying a card, the telephone tapping, the mail censorship, the secret informer usually described as a friend of the police, the deviously conducted conversation over an innocent cup of tea or mug of beer, the secret session in chambers when it comes to giving evidence in a court of law. All these have their parallels in the rituals and processes of the 'secret societies' of traditional communities. Fortunately for Rudi Dutschke, he was able to go to another country in 1971.

If there had not been the possibility of 'expelling' Rudi Dutschke from England to another country or to life imprisonment, then the Government would have had to put up with his presence. British society would have had to live with the social tension of the presence of a revolutionary in its midst until the Government was ready to arrange his secret murder. That is exactly the role of secret societies in a traditional context. One can sympathise with the need to shroud the staging of the exodus of such a person with some "ritual" process which is represented among the Yoruba by Ìrò or the Elúkú or the meeting in the Ogbóni house.

Is the security service to be treated as religion or politics? No anthropologist, sociologist or theologian has so far treated it as religion in tho study of European or American society. Perhaps they should. But what determined that the Ọgbóni Society among the Ègbá of Yorubaland should be treated as religion? The answer to that question would be important for the definition of religion whether among the Yoruba or among the English.

The question of whether or not ancestor-cults are to be treated as religion can also be illuminated by looking at another aspect of English culture. The length of the debate in the Church of England on prayer for the dead, running continuously at least from the sixteenth century to the discussions in 1971 of Alternative Services, I, II, and III, shows the difficulty of ridding men of an existential concern about the dead, a respectful attitude towards the departed, or at least the unremitting effort to keep their memory fresh.

A Martian visitor obsessed by the inwardness of his own religion dedicated only to the worship of God might regard the funerary practices in English parishes as a perverted form of religion.(9) Such practices involve not only the usual burial service but also the laying of wreaths on the grave both on anniversaries of the death and also on occasions calling to mind the role of the dead person in the continuing experience of those who are alive. It involves also the unveiling of a tablet in memory of the departed, the erecting of a statue of the dead, and 'Remembrance Sundays'. It is possible that the Martian visitor would regard these practices in the way anthropologists and missionary students of traditional religion treat similar practices in traditional societies today. He might treat them as ancestor-cults which undermine the integrity of the worship of one God who alone deserves to be worshipped. The fact that the understanding Englishman would consider this as an exercise in wrong interpretation raises questions about an anthropological study of ancestor-cults.

---

9. cf. Horace Miner, "The Bodily Ritual of the Nacirema", American Anthropologist, 58, (1966); pp. 503-7.

The question which anthropologists have raised in this connection has been whether the ancestor is worshipped or not.. It whould also have included the further question as to whether or not funerary customs and traditional practices involving the remembrance of the dead are to be treated as religion. The problem lies in the fact that religion has been defined in theistic terms for the European situation but in socio-functional terms for the African. Questions which are relevant under the first definition sound incongrous when transferred to the other.

There is no doubt that from a pastoral point of view, the attitude of superiority of European missionaries in this regard has ruined great opportunities for meangingful pastoral care of the bereaved. The question could have been sympathetically asked as to the purpose of Yoruba mortuary customs, the place they have in the psychological needs of bereaved individuals, and the sociological role they play in the life of the whole tribe, othnic group, or clan.

What is clear in the examination of these two illustrations is that in traditional societies, all aspects of life are consciously treated as religious, all life as religion. No interpretation other than a religious one is ever considered. Life is taken together in one single bundle. Existence as it is given, life as it is experienced, and human relationships in society are all taken together as being indivisibly intertwined. Even man is hardly seen as distinct from nature. In traditional religions, the whole of life is shrouded in a single mystery, and the mystery is accounted for by reference to the unseen, uncontrollable, trans-human reality behind human existence and experience. In traditional societies religion is fundamentally social, but at the same time personal and experiential. It is because of this social emphasis that religion is all pervasive in such societies.

For these reasons, in dealing with a traditional society, it has been accepted to include the totality of the people's life under the category of "religion". However, in dealing with an industrial society,

it is now the established practice to take account of only a narrow area of life and confine ourselves to such an area described as the church. The fact is that the people themselves so regard themselves and their "religion". Traditional societies hardly ever separate a part of their existence to be defined as religion, whereas technological societies, by the very fact of being technological, have separated their lives into technical and religious, sacred and secular, or holy and profane.

The fact that Christianity has been adopted first by societies which have subsequently become technological raises further complications. Christianity has been treated as being a historical religion in a special sense. It has gone through a massive historical Reformation, and has at the same time become identified with a particular type of culture which surely is no longer primal. Furthermore, it contributed to easing the change-over from a pre-technological to a technological pattern of society, and has itself been affected in the process.

We must realise that what we are doing in Comparative Religion, when that comparison involves pre-technological and technological societies, is forcing upon the former a life distinction which they have not attempted to make themselves. The contribution of Evans-Pritchard to this type of comparative study has been to point the way towards a total anthropology in the case of both societies, whether our primary interest lies in the people's religion or politics or law or economics or the bringing up of children.(10)

Before the coming of Islam and then of Christianity, the Yoruba did not have any need to distinguish between one religion and another. Neither was it necessary to designate one area of life as religion or to separate it from the rest of life. There was, therefore, no

---

10. Robin Horton has reminded us that if religious ideas are our primary interest, the range of beliefs to be considered should include a comparison of the systems of thought dominant in each society. See Africa, XXXVII/1 - 2, January - April, 1967.

Yoruba word for religion. Òrò came closest to being such a word. In the phrase Òrò ilé wa (Our household or kinship custom), Òrò is that which must be done or observed with the knowledge that failure to do it would result in personal or social calamity. Later on, Òrò came to be associated with a particular cult in which the bull-roarer is used, and the bull-roarer itself is called Òrò.[11] But in a general way, Òrò is a common noun standing for the behaviour, practices and systems by which a person or a community of people express their understanding of the forces which seem to control human destiny and by which such people ensure for themselves a feeling and experience of safety, security, solidarity and continuity.

(c) Ethnic and primal

In fact, this "type" of religious situation is found not only in Africa, as among the Yoruba and other tribes, but also outside Africa. It is found, for example, also in the South-East Asian countries of Thailand and the Phillipines, and in the Pacific Islands. The history of most other countries also shows clear indications of its previous existence among them before the advent of the 'scientific attitude' and the growth of industrial 'secularization'. We do not yet have a generally acceptable term to denote what has variously been described as Heathenism, Paganism, Animism, Primitive Religion or even Traditional Religion as it is frequently referred to in this study. All religions have and are based on their own traditions and the traditions of the culture in which they are set.

---

11. "The bull-roarer whereby Òrò makes his voice heard is a perforated bamboo etc. through which a string passes: when the bamboo is swung round, a sound is emitted, varying in pitch with the speed of rotation". R.C. Abraham, Dictionary of Modern Yoruba, London 1958, p. 484.

We hold that a "traditional religion" can be both ethnic and primal. When it has to be considered in comparison with a "world religion", its ethnicity affords the type of comparison or interaction which has been generally described as either culture-contact or acculturation. When ethnicity is thus brought to the fore, we give attention primarily to the cultural content or attachments of the religions under consideration and assess the impact of one set of cultural attachments on the other.(12)

On the primal level, however, attention is paid to the archetypal elements in the traditional religion which may be discovered in other forms in other religions. The understanding is that there are factors in human nature to which all religions respond and there are some basic archetypal forms of religious expression present in all religions and closely related to the nature and existential needs of man.(13)

The primal nature of religion is primary, the ethnic expression or cultural attachment is secondary. Even a world religion, which starts from the basis of beliefs and doctrinal teachings capable of being universalised, soon gathers cultural attachments from any distinct tribe or language group in which it may find itself.(14) That is what is implied when the Church of England is described as "the Conservative Party at prayer". This phrase, which was originally

---

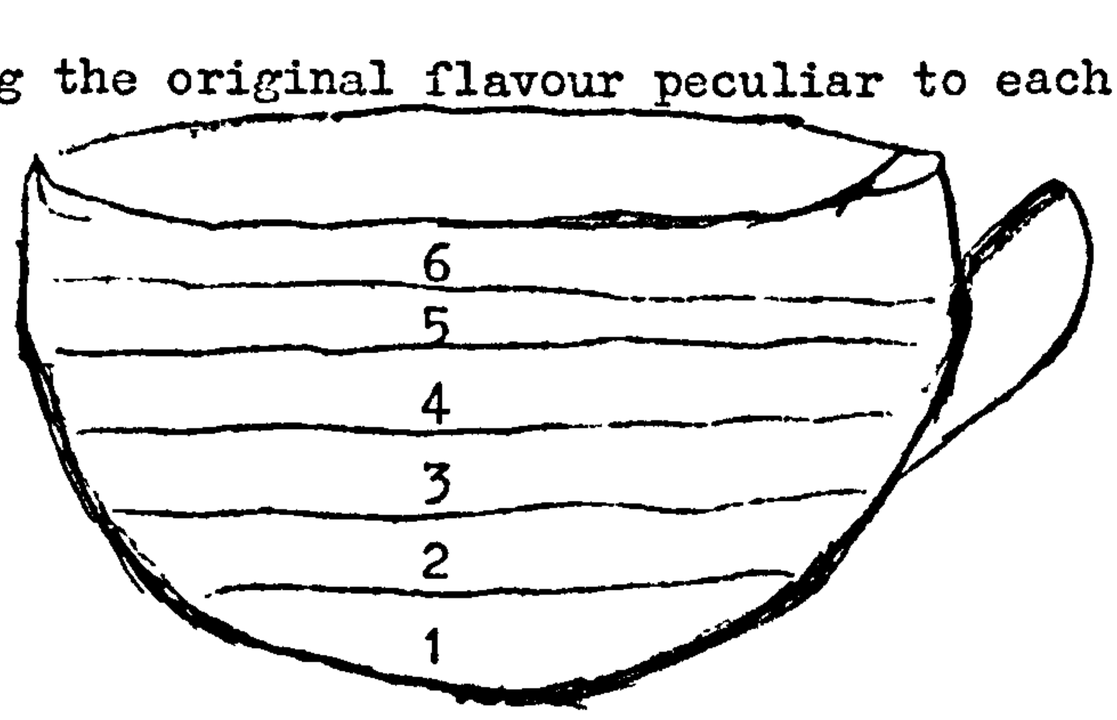
12. The application of evolutionary concept to the study of the religion of African people, the effort to identify such religion in terms of one or the other of the "Elementary Forms of Religion" and the missionary exposition of comparative religion in terms of, say, a "Christian Approach to the Animist" (Harris and Parrinder, Edinburgh House Press, 1960), all fall under this category. It has been an exploration of "African Worlds" on a cultural level, at least of a 'peculiar' Weltanschuung.

13. C.P. Groves, in his Fernley-Hartley Lecture in 1934 interpreted the word 'primitive' in his title in this sense. Jesus Christ and Primitive Need: A Missionary Study in the Christian Message, Epworth Press, London, 1934. The sub-title is significant. It is a study of the Christian Message with illustrations drawn from the missionary land of six Continents, e.g. see p. 136.

14. The value of the distinction we have made in these paragraphs becomes evident whenever an attempt is made to study in depth the religious be-ing of a people. See the study of Kieran Christianity in Russia from the tenth to the thrteenth centuries, G.P. Fedotov, The Russian Religious Mind- Harper & Row, New York, 1946 (1960 edition), e.g. pp. 3-20.

used in a jocular vein, can be understood in a serious anthropological sense. The same Christianity, it must be noted, has similarly taken a different ethnic clothing among the Greeks or the Russians, or the Kerala Christians in South India. When "the Conservative Party at prayer" moved from England to North America, the religion took over new ethnic forms in U.S.A. and in Canada, yet the original "Anglican" form is still discernible. The same is true of the Russian Orthodox Church in America or still of the Anglican Church moving to Southern Nigeria. The different layers are what we now need to be aware of. Even in a world religion, it will not be sufficient to start with the historical doctrinal beliefs which are capable of being universalized and which qualify the religion to be classed as a world religion. Cognizance must be given to the primal substratum.

The whole thing may be illustrated with the picture of soil and sub-soils or jellies of different colours and flavours which are poured on top of one another. If the colours and flavours are capable of seeping through to the lower levels, they might form streaks perpendicularly apart from the basic horizontal layers. They might also spread each flavour throughout the different strata while still keeping the original flavour peculiar to each colour.



The Methodist Church in Nigeria may be illustrated as in the accompanying sketch where the figures represent different factors as follows:

1. The primal religious elements common to all men everywhere.
2. The historic Christianity of the New Testament up to the 16th century.

3. The ethnic expression of this Christianity, now called the Church of England.

4. The Wesleyan Methodist Church which grew out of the Church of England after the death of John Wesley.

5. The Wesleyan and later Methodist Church in Nigeria which resulted from the visit of Thomas Birch Freeman with the work of succeeding missionaries and of Nigerian ministers, and as influenced by the presence of local Anglicans, Baptists, Roman Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses etc.

The sixth factor has been put in for full measure, standing for the United African Methodist Church (U.A.M.C.) which broke away from the Yoruba Wesleyan Methodists from 1917 onwards. And the process goes on. For some other Yoruba Christians, there are other layers designated variously by the names, 'The Eternal Order of Cherubim and Seraphim', 'The Christ Apostolic Church', 'The Church of the Lord (Aládúrà)', or the like. Yet it must be pointed out that it cannot be taken for granted that layer 5 (where the present writer finds a religious home and vocation) is in 1976 free from unacknowledged influences wielded by the other layers on top.

What is maintained in this regard in the present study is that in comparing Ifá[15] and "Layer 5 Christianity" among the Yoruba for any period, but specifically for the period 1890 - 1940, the nature of Ifá as a primal religion makes it fair and just that the presence and perennial influence of Layer 1 in the Layer 1-6 complex should be consciously and methodologically acknowledged.

It should be clear from our discussion so far that an adequate understanding of Yoruba traditional religion will grow not only out of an ontological or essentialist definition of religion, but also out of an intuitional and functional definition. The classical definition of religion as "belief in spiritual beings" can be taken as essentialist and ontological. The ontological definition may identify the Ultimate Reality either in terms of a God or gods, of spirits and spiritual beings,

---

15. Ifá, which is one of the religions under examination in this thesis, is defined in chapter II, section 4a below.

or dynamism and life-force. In contrast, Paul Tillich's definition of religion in terms of Ultimate Concern can be adopted to open a wider window towards an understanding of Yoruba religion.(16) By ultimate concern here, we do not mean an objective reality of the concern but our emphasis is first laid on the fact that religion grows out of human concern.

For people in traditional societies, religion is the people's concern for life, on the understanding that life has many ramifications and variations and is sustained separately and corporately by various forces, seen and unseen, physical and psychical, personal and social, human and divine, transcendent and immanent, temporal and eternal.

Both theology and phenomenology - the classical religious studies disciplines - err in concentrating attention either on objects of belief or on religious practices and practitioners. Even when Durkheim has added to belief and practice the fact of a congregation or church, the fundamental element is still left out.(17) Paul Tillich's calling attention to "ultimate concern" and the efforts of contemporary theologians to give detailed consideration to themes like the theology of Hope or of Liberation may help to correct the past and emphasise theology's true vocation.

Most definitions of religion, whether comprehensive enough or not, rest on a recognition of the centrality of religious experience.(18)

---

16. Paul Tillich, The New Being, Scribner's, New York, 1955, pp. 152-160. Theology of Culture, O.U.P., New York, 1964, pp. 3-9, 40-51. Systematic Theology, Vol.1 Chicago, 1951, pp. 211f. J. Milton Yinger, Religion, Society and the Individual, MacMillan, 1957, pp. 8ff.

17. Emile Durkheim - The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, Allen & Unwin, London 1913, p. 47.

18. We agree on the whole with the caveats laid down by Prof. Idowu on pp. 73-4 of his work on a definition of African Traditional Religion, especially with the point (d) on p. 74f. We are impressed that following the caveats, his proposed definition on page 75 begins with "Religion results from man's awareness of, and spontaneous reaction to .....". That is the point we are making here. And we further suggest that the study of Yoruba Traditional Religion has not hitherto taken this starting-point into due consideration.

While it may not be readily admitted that religion is equivalent to religious experience, it can nevertheless be accepted that religious experience is the core of religion.

To understand traditional religion among the Yoruba, one has to see man in his environment, man in the centre of his universe, with different objects of the environment impinging upon him and giving him a series of experiences. An experience becomes a religious experience insofar as it constitutes, both for the time being and in relation to other experiences, a concern, a cause for anxiety, a stimulant towards a search for meaning.(19) A religious experience or feeling becomes an ultimate concern when the intensity of that particular experience gives it a greater importance over and against other experiences and feelings. One concern by itself can be taken as an ultimate concern, and similarly a series of concerns can jointly constitute an ultimate concern. This is the matrix, we believe, from which Yoruba traditional religion arose. However, in addition, a community religion is made up of similar concerns or series of concerns arising from the experiences of a community and their reaction to their community experience.

For an individual person, the experience which constitutes the ultimate concern may be an experience of the cosmos, universe or natural world in which the individual lives, or essentially the impact of God's action on the person. It includes also the person's own awareness and understanding of himself within his environment. The third important element in the experience of an individual arises out of social relationships, in face-to-face contacts and in joint undertakings and aspirations. A fourth element needs to be added, which is an understanding of a second order, based upon a person's reaction to his own interpretations of the universe, and to the belief systems to which such interpretations give rise.

---

19. E.G. Selwyn (ed.), Essays Catholic and Critical, SPCK, London, 1926. Alfred Edward Taylor's contribution, pp. 29-82 on "The Vindication of Religion" approached the issue from three angles: From Nature to God, From Man to God, and From God to God. It is significant that though he treated Religious Experience under the third aspect, he could assert: "religious experience means not some isolated group of bizarre experiences but the special way in which the whole of life is experienced by the 'religious' man" (p. 71): cf. p. 104. cf. J.M. Yinger, on. cit. pp. 16-17.

Durkheim resolved the conflict between the empirical and a-priorist theories by the hypothesis of "collective representations"[20] This latter is in the final analysis the accumulated experience of social groups. Whether accumulated or not, the fact still remains that it is an experience, whether it be of an individual or of a group. To understand religion in this sense is to depart from a pre-occupation with ontological classifications and description of rituals, and to proceed rather to an analysis of personal and social experience which constitutes the source and context of religious behaviour.

Our investigation has led us to the conclusion that in popular religion, the starting point should always be from the human condition and situation. Then an effort may be made to show how the people have attempted to deal with their situation through the manipulation of, or the reconciliation of themselves to, cosmological powers or forces, and how they have come to understand 'or to respond to' signals of divine initiative for their well-being.

3. Ìsìn: RELIGION AS THE SERVICE OF GOD

(a) The concept of Ìsìn:

We have noted that Òrò was the term first used for all ritual processes and patterns among the Yoruba. It was only later on that selected elements of "native customary behaviour" came to be described as Ìsìn ilẹ wa the worship system or the religion of our land. Before then, there was no distinguishing Yoruba expression for religion as a system. The word, Ìsìn, which ultimately came to be used by Christians as the Yoruba word for religion, was first used for 'service' and then for 'worship'. As an abstract or collective noun, it has been formed from the Yoruba very "to serve", -sìn. The noun was deliberately coined for specific church use and came into wide circulation when the Bible was translated into Yoruba. Then it became useful when Christian

---

20. E. Durkheim, op. cit. pp. 15-16.

preachers had to make the distinction in their sermons between Christianity as a religion and other ritual systems.

The Yoruba verb from which the substantive Isin is derived stands for 'to give service as the interest on a loan', to work for another as an acknowledgment of one's obligation, to be of help to someone as a young man works on his father's farm or as a young woman works in her mother's trade while leaving to the father or mother the authority to administer the proceeds.(21) But, of course, when the young person comes of age, he ceases to work on his father's farm. He makes his own farm and takes of the produce of his own farm to look after the father. The filial responsibility of caring for the father in his old age is not described by the Yoruba word sin. It is the earlier responsibility, required by the father's authority and the responding service arising out of the son's obedience and submission, that is so described.

The working definition of religion used by the missionaries to Yorubaland and by the Yoruba converts to Christianity was "the service of God."(22) This definition is theological, rather than anthropological, sociological or philosophical. The difference between the theological and these other definitions needs to be noted. The main differences is that it assumes and builds upon the fact of God. In this particular definition, the worth-ship of God becomes a fundamental principle,

---

21. It is interesting to note the very precise use of the verb -sin in the Yoruba translation of the Old Testament wherever the LXX has the verbal forms of latreia as distinct from leitourgia and cognate words. The noun isin has been used regularly for latreia, and the other substantive leitourgia was rendered as ise isin, the work of serving. This latter rendering has apprently been encouraged by the Greek circumlocution leitourgein ten leitourgian found in such passages as Num. 8:22; 16:9; 18:21; 23; II Chron. 11:14. Isin as the Yoruba word for religion may therefore be taken as a distinguishing vocabulary marking the influence of Yoruba converts to Christianity on their mother tongue.

22. This was the prevailing definition of religion in the Old Testament. The notable passages are Exodus 20:5, 23; 24-5; Joshua 22: 27; 24: 14-24; Dan. 3:14, 17, 18, 28.

almost an ideological principle.(23)

It has generally been assumed that the methods and approached which have been developed in the study of Christian theology will be applicable to the study of traditional religions. The fact that these may ot be suitable for the latter purpose because of the differences between Christianity and other religions has not been seriously faced by theologians. Yet, when it is remembered that it is primarily out of the scientific study of Christianity in particular that a relevant academic discipline has grown up which is rightly called theology, it may begin to dawn on us that the assumption must no longer go unchallenged.

(b) Theo-logos

As an academic discipline, theology is the subject in which attention is concentrated on the study of God-centred or God-dominated religions. But not all religions are God-centred and God-oriented.

Christianity is definitely concerned about God. So also are Judaism and Islam. These are God-centred religions. The stories in the Bible are all stories about God. The role played by particular individuals and personalities in both the Old Testament and the New Testament become significant only in so far as they cooperate with or are antagonistic to the purpose and workings of God which are the main focus of the stories of the Bible. Hence biblical scholars have debated the justification for including the book of Esther in the canon of the Old Testament. A central objection is that the book

---

23. There are other definitions of religion expressed or assumed in the Bible. One is the soul's natural longing for God as implied in various Psalms, e.g. "Out of the depths, I cry unto Thee, O Lord" (Ps. 130), "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God" (Ps. 42). Augustine's "Thou has made us for Thyself, and our souls know no rest in themselves until they find rest in Thee" belongs to the same tradition. John Baillie, among others, has put this in philosophical terms, in his "Our Knowledge of God" O.U.P. 1939, pp. 3-42.

In the New Testament, we meet definitions corrective of this and the previous one. Paul's suggestion that man's "reasonable service" is to offer his soul and body as a living sacrifice unto God (Rom. 12:1) can be identified as a corrective of the notion that God demands man's service. Also, over and against the individualistic definition of religion as the soul searching for fellowship with God and finding personal satisfaction in gazing on God, St. James offers his societary definition which finds "pure and genuine religion" (TEV) in caring for the afflicted in their suffering and keeping oneself uncorrupted by the world. (1:27). Thus, the Bible itself has been critical of our prevailing definitions.

has no reference to God at all, at least not on the surface. In the biblical events concerning the destiny of man, it is God Himself who takes the initiative. The gifts which He bestows on man are given as acts of absolute grace, not depending on man's deserts or initiative in praying and in doing good moral and religious works. This is quite different from other religions.

The note struck by St. Paul in his speech on the Areopagus, that God made all mankind of one blood to seek after Him if possibly they might feel after Him and find Him, has been taken by exegetes as being out of tune with the general tone of the Bible and more in consonance with the tenor of a natural theology typifying a non-biblical interpretation of religion.(24) The special distinction and uniqueness of Christianity in this regard, it has been pointed out, is that from first to last Christianity is a religion of God seeking man and not of man seeking God.(25) Right from the Abrahamic and Mosaic contributions to Judaism to which Christianity is closely related in origin, up to and beyond the Incarnation which became the climactic event of this category, the story has been a series in crescendo of the doings of God, creating man, seeking, redeeming and bringing him into glory. This is quite different from other religions, it has been pointed out. Most of the religions of the world, apart from the theistic ones, are man-dominated religions in which even God plays an instrumental role. This can be accepted without any value-

---

24. Acts 17:23f. For a full discussion of the sermon, see C.J. Bleeker, Christ in Modern Athens, Mowbray, London 1966. The discontinuity argument, however, has been forcefully given of late. High-water marks in the redefinition or popularization of this approach can be noted in Bishop Gore (Charles Gore, Belief in God, John Murray, London, 1921); Karl Barth's monograph "No" in reply to Emil Brunner, (1916); English translation in E. Brunner, Natural Theology, comprising "Nature and Grace" by Emil Brunner and the reply "No" by Karl Barth, translated by Peter Fraenkel etc., Geoffrey Bliss, London, 1946. Hendrick Kraemer, The Christian Message in a non-Christian World, London 1938.
This last reference was a preparatory volume for the International Missionary Council's conference in Tambaram, outside Madras, India, 1938. Two Yoruba Church leaders attended the conference: Rt. Rev. I.B. Akinyele (Anglican) and Rev. M.O. Dada (Methodist). For them, the discussion of this theme in Tambaram and afterwards was overshadowed by the passing reference to theissue of polygamy by some missionary societies as the missiological issue for Africa. It was in Ghana that the issue was later picked up at a conference on "Christianity and African Culture", May, 1955.

25. cf. H. Mackintosh, Divine Initiative, S.C.M. Press, London, 1921. See Idowu, African Traditional Religion: A Definition, S.C.M. Press, London, 1973, pp. 56f.

judgement such as arose out of social evolutionary theories of a previous generation.

Apart from its starting-point in God, a second characteristic of theology is its concentration on beliefs. Until recently, all theological disciplines were devoted to a study of beliefs. Theology as a whole, and especially systematic theology, has developed as a subject in which beliefs are analysed and studied, beliefs about God, man, sin, salvation, the Church and its sacraments and orders, death, life after death, heaven and hell, final judgement, and human destiny. Even Evangelical Christianity with its deep recognition and rediscovery of the central place of experience in personal religion has contributed its own concepts and beliefs to be held and therefore studied: repentance, faith, redemption, regeneration, assurance and sanctification.

That is, the protestant correction that faith is trust not beliefs has not changed the theological method. The study of beliefs has continued without let, Schleiermacher notwithstanding. But we have to recognize that Yoruba traditional religion does not concentrate on beliefs. Therefore a comparative study of beliefs would not get us to the root of the matter.

There is also a third characteristic of the theological method which is germane to our discussion. It is that Christian Theology has been over the years too much dominated by Greek metaphysical ideas. Even the Jewish approach to religion would not be at home with the Greek approach. The Old Testament assumes the existence of God; whereas theology sets out to find God at the end of an argument. The Bible speaks of the nature of God mainly in terms of his relationship with man, but the dominant theological approach describes the nature of God in terms of metaphysics and ontology. Part of the cause of the wide gap between church preaching and academic theology is due to this, that preachers Sunday after Sunday have to make their start from the Bible which is dominated by the Jewish personalistic approach, whereas theologians deal mainly with metaphysical concepts.

So, we have these three main characteristics of theology as an academic discipline and as a method of studying religion. With the increasing awareness of the existence of other religions, scholars started to feel quietly at first but insistently all the time that the 'theological' method cannot legitimately be used for the scientific study of all religions. According to W. Robertson Smith,(26) even Semitic religion is studied better from its rituals, religious actions and experience of personal relationship with God by election, than from its beliefs. Soon afterwards, with the knowledge of other religions brought along by the Comparative Study of Religions, the 'anomaly' of Buddhism, especially Hinayana Buddhism, became evident. This religion not only does not concentrate on God, but it practically has no idea of God. Of course, theologians have soon made sure that Buddhism could be said to have in it substitutes for the God-idea. On the whole, it has to be admitted that the 'theological' method, as described above, is not altogether suitable for the study of religions like the Yoruba in which the idea of God is not the dominant referent, in which the main emphasis is not articulated beliefs, and in which the cultural world-view is basically different from the Greek.

(c) Monotheism

The concept of monotheism/polytheism which has become an outstanding feature in the discussion of West African Religion since Parrinder's use of it as a group title is a case in point. The question is whether the concept of monotheism or polytheism ought to have been used at all.

There is no doubt that the question about monotheism is important in the academic study of religions and very relevant to the work of Christian Missions. But we must face the possibility that the question is not properly raised and that the answer may be unduly prejudiced

---

26. W. Robertson Smith, Religion of the Semites, A. & C. Black, London, 1894, pp. 16-20.

unless we first of all make sure that the situation we are dealing with is not one of religious pluralism rather than of polytheism. On the surface, polytheism means the worship of many gods. But used loosely it often implies simply the recognition and toleration of many religions in one cultural situation. In other words, there is the possibility that religious pluralism may get misinterpreted as a case of theological polytheism.

There is a sense in which traditional religions have been studied too much in terms of assumptions carried over from the knowledge of world religions. Fixed attitudes of mind on the part of scholars, who brought from their experience of post-medieval Western Europe the maxim, cuius regio cius religio, led to the expectation that in one nation there would be only one religion. The ruler in an area was almost considered to be under an obligation to lay down both what should be the religion of the people and what the organizational and worship patterns of their religious life should be. From the late Middle Ages to the early years following the Reformation and the spread of its influence in Europe, monotheism grew in this context of the political principle of cuius regio eius religio.(27) The missionary movement of the nineteenth century pushed the idea of Christendom to a universal level, and the discovery of the religions of the Orient brought with it the emergence of the concept of World Religions. It is very easy, in spite of denominationalism, to come from all these to the scientific study of the religious factor in the life of any people in the twentieth century and expect to find one single religion or cult among one people. Yet, except where a jihad or an Act of Uniformity or an Inquisition or some other form of coercion has forced such uniformity, African societies do not lend support to this assumption.

---

27. Peace of Augsburg, 1555. See F.L. Cross (ed.) Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. cf. D.L. Edwards, Religion and Change, Hodder and Stoughton, 1969, pp. 59-60. See F.B. Welbourn's discussion on five ideal types of religious society in Baeta (1968) pp. 133f.

The existence of sub-cultures within cultures and of sub-groups within larger groups adds to this complexity, for it is possible even for a sub-group or a sub-culture to exhibit its own religion. Thus, several religions can be found within one subculture. It depends on what constitutes the subculture, whether it is ethnic relation, residence, profession or recreation. We do not necessarily find only one religion in a group or sub-group unless that group originated in response to a religious vision, as in the Ãiyétòrò Community in South Western Nigeria.(28) The existence of denominations and sects in Protestantism and of semi-autonomus Orders and Communities in Roman Catholicism is an indication that a religious sub-culture is not a guarantee against the rise of splinter sub-cultures with distinctive religious emphases, practices and cults of their own. Discussions on polytheism have not previously recognised the distinction between the worship of many gods by one person or one group and the simultaneous presence of many cults within one cultural situation. We hold that this distinction is essential. It is possible to argue that there are many Yoruba religions or cults - Ọ̀bàtálá, Sàngó, Ògún, Èsù, Ọ̀yá, Ọ̀ṣun; Ẹ̀ẹ̀gún, Ọ̀rò, Àgẹ̀mọ́, etc. This can be done in spite of Ifá which we believe came to be the sum-total of Yoruba religion in that it seems to have incorporated all the other religions of the Yoruba by a process of absorption or osmosis, thus becoming so to speak the central Yoruba religion. This does not make Ifá a polytheism for in each cult there is belief in the same God, Ọ̀lọ́run. Also, through conquest, political stragegy, migration and inter-marriage, etc., the paramount cult of one area has become accepted in another area or even in many other areas of Yorubaland in a spirit of ethnic and religious brotherhood.

---

28. cf. E.H. Duckworth, "A Visit to the Apostles and the Town of Aiyetoro", Nigeria Magazine, XXXVI, 1951, p. 387.

For this reason, each religion has to be examined in itself. Even when this is done, it may be found that there are many religions but in each there is belief in only one God, although each has a peculiar system of rites and relationships. The fact that different peoples adhering to different religious systems accept and respect others who may be worshipping under a different system still does not make them polytheists. Thus, it is not legitimate to speak here of polytheism though we may speak of religious pluralism.

When Parrinder did his illuminating study entitled Religion in An African City, what he intended to call attention to, as the contents of the book showed, was the phenomenon of religion as manifested in Islam, Christianity and what has come to be described as Traditional Religion. A visitor from Mars today coming without a knowledge of Nigerian history but concerned with the issue of monotheism might put Ìbàdàn down as a polytheistic city. He could reach this conclusion on the strength of the evidence adduced in Religion in an African City, especially if he took it that it was the same individual who embraced Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity at the same time. What Parrinder noted, and what we need to take into consideration here, however, was a situation of religious pluralism (a phenomenon which is being recognised more and more today) in Ìbàdàn, involving two world religions and what was described as a local traditional religion. But is religious pluralism a new phenomenon?

The student of the history of religion has become familiar with the struggle of the Jews of the Old Testament against polytheism and their zeal to maintain the worship of Yahweh alone among their people. But, in fact, among the Jews, the contest was not concerning cults arising out of the indigenous culture within Israel itself as it happens to be among the Yoruba. Rather, it was between Israel and the neighbouring peoples. It was a question of whether they gave allegiance to Yahweh their own God alone or gave allegiance also to the gods of the surrounding nations. It is significant for our argument that the Jews did not say at first that the gods of the nations did not exist.

Rather, they said those were the gods of the other nations, and it was not right for Jews to leave their own God and worship the gods of other nations, or to worship these foreign gods side by side with their own.

The period of the Early Church was dominated by numerous mystery religions. They might have had the element of "mystery" in common. But those who studied them were aware of dealing not simply with one religion but with several different religions.

In his Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, to which reference has been made, Robertson Smith (1889) long ago pointed out the risk of studying the religion of "primitives" with ideas brought over from European formal and institutionalised religions. But his observation was made to concern beliefs and creeds in contradistinction from rituals. For the same reasons as he adduced, the whole question of religious pluralism needs to be raised in so far as it affects the issues of monotheism and polytheism.

Next, the philosophical discussion of the issue of monotheism versus polytheism is by nature different from a discussion of the same issue in anthropology and comparative religion. In other words, a distinction has to be recognised between the idea of God and the fact of God, between God as a concept imagined and God as a real living, personal, active Being. For the latter, a further distinction has to be made between God in Himself and the manifestations of God.

When Professor Idowu describes the Yoruba position as that of "diffused monotheism", it is not clear in which respect of the above distinctions he meant it to be understood, whether in the realm of thought or in the realm of existence.

On the level of existence, is there only one God for the whole universe, or many? This is the important question. When the question is put to a Yoruba, the answer is clearly on the side of monotheism. There is only one Ọlórun Ọlódumarè for the whole world, and he has no

UNIVERSITY
OF BRISTOL

equal. The implicit problem is clearly put by old Yoruba village women who look out into the sky in the morning, saying "Ọlọ́dùmarè, we can see only your face, but we don'g know where your eyes are". The distinction between face and eyes is what we have stated in terms of existence and manifestations. The relevance of the revelation in Jesus Christ becomes a universal critique of religions at this point.

Once a people are recognised as believing that there is only one God,[29] then the question which is properly raised is not that of monotheism, for that is already a decided issue, but that of monolatry. The question must be, do they worship the only one God or do they feel otherwise led to determine the pattern of their religious practice? It is the question of cults and cultism that must be raised. It is a question of how many cults have arisen out of the world-view and the general culture of the people.

Furthermore, in so far as many aspects of traditional religion deal with nature, the study of religion is closely analogous to the study of science today. The two realms of religion and of science as study of nature may have been separated in modern society.

They were not separated in traditional societies. The difficulty of keeping nature as an integral entity for study and manipulation is the same in every generation. To man in traditional Yoruba society, the recognition of a distinction between the life of vegetation, the fact of lightning and of particular epidemic diseases is expressed in patterns of human behaviour associated with Ọbàtálá, Sàngó, Sọ̀pọ̀nná etc. Similarly, modern society has its agricultural scientists, physicists, and medical specialists. Not everybody is a physicist or microbiologist. Yet everybody needs to accept the conclusions of physicists or microbiologists as the case may be when the need arises.

---

29. G. Parrinder (1961), op. cit., pp. 13ff. E.B. Ìdòwú (1962) pp. 32ff. African Traditional Religion: A Definition, S.C.M. Press, 1973, pp. 149-165. Pettazoni has put forth a theory that the idea of 'only one God' as distinct from the idea of 'a Supreme God' belongs only to a civilized culture and as the result of religious revolution. If we accept this, two possible conclusions can be drawn here. It must be that we do not know the Yoruba in their 'primitive' stage, and we have not discovered the story of the revolution in religion which brought about Yoruba monotheism. Or, Pettazoni may be wrong in his use of "civilized"! See Lessa & Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion, Harper & Row, N.Y., 1965, pp. 34ff. for Pettazoni on "The Formation of Monotheism".

What anthropologists and scholars of comparative religion write about polytheists in traditional societies has to be put in terms of poly-scientists in comtemporary societies.(30) The absurdity might then be evident. It might then also become patently clear that adjectives like vague, diffused, or primitive do not necessarily apply where we have ascribed them to man in traditional societies.

So, in the light of science as the study of nature, it can be argued that there is a sense in which we can speak of Yoruba Religion in the singular. In all the religious system to which we have referred above and in others as well, there is belief in only one God, but with different systems of religious cultus. We can speak of one Yoruba religion and all the different cults referred to above as branches, "systems" or "denominations" of the same religion. This is the same sense in which Dr. Parrinder persuaded us to speak of "African Religion" in the singular with the different varieties of it all over the continent as denominators or denominations of the same. That is, all the different systems belong to one single type of religion which happens to stand in contra-distinction to World Religions. African Religion in all the different countries of the continent has in this sense some characteristics in common. Though this same religion may exhibit different features under different cultural forms, yet there is only one religion. In this case, again, it is not legitimate to speak of a polytheism. Rather, this latter argument suggests religious polymorphism.

It is necessary to add that there is the possibility that at an early stage Dr. Parrinder was conscious of the inadequacy of the term used and that he was meaning to redefine polytheism in the particular sense in which it might be applicable to a study of the religion of the Yoruba and other West African peoples. Soon after suggesting the term 'polythesim', he wrote that polythesim can be taken to include a

---

30. cf. Austin Farrer in "Faith and Speculation" (1967), discussing the notion of God as anima mundi: "God can be Universal Mind only by transcending that multiplicity which the Universe is" (p. 175); quoted by C.S. Duthie in Maurice Wiles (ed.) Providence, SPCK, 1969.

number of different facets of religion "as we shall see below". We note, however, that the subject was not raised again so that the term was never redefined in the book. What is noticeable is that the description which followed in the book indeed went beyond what might be narrowly defined as polytheism. Polymorphic might have been a better description. But this term could not have been used without a definition undertaking to describe and explain the significance of polymorphism in the study of any, and especially of traditional, religion.

The academic need to find a way through the forest of cults and rituals by discovering broad lines of religious belief and practice to be named as "African Religion" is appreciated. But the empirical reality of religious multiformity and pluralism ought to be acknowledged.

Meanwhile, we would agree with Dr Parrinder's conclusion in a later book: "It cannot be said that Africans are simply animists, believing in personal spirits and polytheistic pantheons. Nor are they merely animatists, thinking of uncoordinated energies. A few writers would even call them monotheists, since all powers are subject to the Supreme Being. But this again would oversimplify the picture".(31) In a later paper Parrinder observed: "It may be that some African writers are too concerned with fitting religion into a framework of monotheism and would do better to recognize that religion can operate in different ways <u>according to need</u>" (underlining mine).(32)

Our hesitation to accept the appropriateness of the monotheism/polytheism category for the study of traditional religion applies also to such concepts as transcendence and immanence. These are ideas inherited from Greek philosophy. They are not necessarily applicable to African Traditional Religion. Neither are they in fact justifiably applicable to Biblical Religion. Biblical Religion does

---

31. <u>op. cit.</u>, 1962 p. 26

32. "Monotheism and Pantheism in Africa", <u>Journal of Religion in Africa</u>, E.J. Brill, Leiden, Vol. 3, 1970, pp. 81-88.

not deal in concepts, rather it deals in relationships, confrontation, and experience. In the Bible, attributes are not even applied to God as abstract nouns, rather they come in the concreteness of names, praise names and practical actions to be recounted in story and song. The oft-quoted passage from the closing paragraphs of Albert Schweitzer's The Quest of the Historical Jesus (1910) expresses the spirit of Biblical religion more accurately and more adequately than concepts like transcendence, immanence, omnipresence or ominiscience borrowed from Greek philosophy.

> "He comes to us as One unknown, without a name; as of old, by the lakeside. He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: 'Follow thou me!' and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is."

The publication of William James' Varieties of Religious Experience at the beginning of this century marked the start of a new era, the significance of which is not yet fully realized, especially in its implications for comparative religion. The recognition that there is a multifocality in religion and religious experience should have led by now to a disciplined acceptance of multifocality itself as a method in the comparative study of religious systems. But this has not yet happened and is long overdue. Let us examine, for an illustration of this point, the prevalent assumption of the universality of worship as a religious response.

(d) Worship

Dr. Parrinder has produced evidence concerning the presence in West Africa of belief in God which is not accompanied by worship of Him, or at least that the worship of God has not been seen to be the

central element in such religious systems. Of the ten or more tribes and people whom he studied, only the Ashanti stand out as having built temples or shrines, erected altars and established a priesthood for the Supreme Being. The others, including the Yoruba, afford no substantial evidence of a God-cult.(33) Professor E.B. Idowu has looked for evidence to prove that the Yoruba worship Olodumare. The evidence cited does not prove the case. His chapter on the issue is by far the shortest and weakest in the whole book.(34) The fact remains that there are, among the Yoruba, many cultic centres and shrines dedicated to the Orisa (possibly taken as other gods and goddesses or as spirits of the natural world). These shrines are places where the Orisa are supposed to be living or at least accessible and where devotees can make contact with them. But no such shrine, temple or cultic centre has been found for Olodumare.(35) If there had ever been a direct cultic worship of Olodumare, then it must have disappeared beyond trace. Any one who insists that there was at one time such a cult ought to face the question why it disappeared leaving behind no evidence of its previous existence.(36) But, in any case, why is God not worshipped when it can be proved that the people believe in Him? This is a question which deserves to be raised, and it will be helpful to look into it in relation to the issue of polytheism which has been discussed above.

---

33. G. Parrinder (1949), pp. 13-23f, 1961 edition.

34. See E.B. Idowu (1962), pp. 140-143 for the very short chapter.

35. cf. C.R. Gaba, "The Idea of the Supreme King among the Anlo people of Ghana", Journal of Religion in Africa, 2/1, pp. 64-79.

36. cf. J.O'Connell, "The Withdrawal of the High God in West African Religion. An essay in Interpretation", in Man, May 1962, No. 109, for comments on the disappearance of the cult. The argument is vitiated by his use of the term deus absconditus on which Idowu has to concentrate in his reply in Idowu (1973), pp. 63f. Robin Horton in his critical "High God: A Comment on Father O'Connell's Paper", Man, September 1962, No. 219, came to the significant concluding observation that it is the religious outlook and study methodologies of social anthropologists and comparative religionists which account for the errors in interpretation in the discussion of monotheism in the history of religions.

As the modern scholar looks at Yoruba traditional religion, he finds that the Orisa are "worshipped" even though Olorun Himself is not worshipped. To worship many gods is polytheism, the argument goes. Those who find God in nature as such, that is, in the collectivity of the natural world, as distinct from those who divinise different aspects of nature itself, may be monotheists of a type. But those who find God in natural objects or who divinise natural objects or natural phenomena ultimately have many gods and are therefore polytheists. Thus polytheism is the theoretical term chosen to describe such religions which include belief in spiritual beings of various kinds, and in which the trouble has not been taken to formulate carefully the ontological relationship between these beings and the Supreme Being.

In polytheism, the worshippers personalize and divinise different bits of the natural world, like stones, hills, forests, rivers, animals, dead ancestors. So the theoretical explanation goes. The nature divinities, of course, are anthropomorphised elements of nature. Only the Supreme Being, God the Almighty, Olorun Olodumare, is not deducible from nature because He is the Creator and in Him all the parts of nature subsist.

Traditionally, it is believed among the Yoruba that the nature divinities are designed to serve the ends of man.(37) But the Yoruba also believe that there are rebellious nature-divinities and spirits, who have shown rebellion against God and His purpose for man. It is these that in traditional religion are worshipped, placated, bribed, soothed or sometimes compelled to work for the interest of man. Is it correct then to use the same word 'Worship' both for this and for what is offered to God? The discussion of whether God is worshipped or not in traditional religion, or what kind of worship is offered to idols, images, god and bad spirits, etc. has not yet taken place on the level

---

37. Idowu, (1962), pp. 57-106.

of a clear enough definition of 'worship' itself. Only in the discussion of so-called ancestor-worship has some effort been made to clarify the meaning and definition of worship by utilising the distinctions which have been made under similar conditions in Roman Catholic theology. Worship, interpreted as the communal adoration or extolling of the worth-ship of God, is a theological interpretation which has not always been the dominant religious motive.(38)

Having discovered that there are those who do not emphasis the worship of God though they show knowledge of and belief in God, the question has to be asked as to what else they do with their God-idea, and what is their main attitude to the God in whom they claim to believe. As it happens, we already know that God is not only worshipped and adored. He is also sought out, trusted when His purpose is not altogether manifest, and obeyed when his guidance and directives are clearly known. He can be cajoled and soothed if "the wrath of God" is part of the religious belief. Believers can seek communion with Him, seek to be His medium should it be felt that He would like to communicate with others through an intermediary, seek to be like Him either simply by character imitation or by complete metamorphosis, or seek mystical identification with Him. Communal worship does not exhaust the possibilities of what people do with the God they believe in, neither is it necessarily the first option recognised by all religious systems. Worship is only one of the possible attitudes man can adopt towards God. In the Bible itself both the prophets of the Old Testament and Jesus of Nazareth Himself adopted a very critical view of worship as an expression of a Godward relationship. While they did not altogether rule out the need for worship, they surely condemned many forms of worship. They made declarations about what attitudes and actions might be more justifiably considered to be "what the Lord requires of thee" (Micah 6: 6-8; I Sam. 15: 22-23a; Isa. 1:10-17; Amos 5: 21-24; Hosea 6:6).

38. A.M. Fairbairn, Studies in Religion and Theology, 1910, pp. 264-282. For a discussion of the normative role of worship in religion, see H.H. Farmer, Religion and Revelation, chs. 2 and 3.

They gave expositions of what might be regarded as higher concepts of worship (John 4: 19-26). Notwithstanding, historians of religion have been so disposed to look for theistic definitions and qualifications with an attendant worship, that the absence of it in some religions simply leaves them puzzled.

Since worship is not the only possible expression of devotion towards God, the study of a traditional religion must necessitate an investigation into what other forms of behaviour and attitude the adherents might have conceived to be the appropriate expression of their relationship to God as they understand Him. We have found through this study that Yoruba treatment and regard for Ọlọ́run is expressed in trust, not in cultic worship. It is a Faith-regard. The history of faith-regard which is not accompanied by worship has not yet been written.(39) We would like to take D.M. Baillie's definitive study of faith as a distinct factor in religious life, experience and practice as a welcome contribution to the study of variety in types of religious experience.(40) But before the significance of it can be fully realized, it is necessary first to reappraise and appreciate in an objective way the elementary forms of traditional religion, the Ọ̀rọ̀-concept, which have often been dismissed as crude, primitive, or unscientific.

4. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Between Ọ̀rọ̀ and Ìsìn as two Yoruba words roughly representing the English word "religion", there is a basic difference of approach to the idea of religion. Ọ̀rọ̀ stands for the typical viewpoint of Yoruba traditional religion. It is customary rituals both expressive and performed in the interest of the human situation.

---

39. This is the problem which Allistair Kee undertook to review in his The Way of Transcendence, Pelican, 1971, pp. 193-196. See also the discussion under S.S. Farrow in chap. II below.

40. D.M. Baillie, Faith in God and its Christian Consummation, Faber & Faber, London, first published in 1927, but was reissued in 1960 with a long appreciative forward by John McIntyre of Edinburgh.

\\
Isin connotes the typical position of Christian missionaries to Yorubaland. It is the service of God, a viewpoint which is an inheritance from the history of Christian theology. This difference between the Yoruba conception of religion and the missionary view created a great deal of conflict in the mind of many Yoruba converts to Christianity. They were converted to 'the worship of God', and it was their delight to worship Him. But they were told that this also required an abandonment of "the ways of our fathers" and the traditional lineage observances which secured the well-being of the individual or community. Missionary justification for this rejection was that kinship customary rites were devil-worship or spirit-worship. Many Yoruba Christians rightly perceived that it was the solidarity of society which was at stake.

The first point to note in conclusion is that different religions imply different definitions of religion, otherwise they would not be different religions. Even in the same religion there may be differences of interpretation and definition, which make for cults, sects and denominations.(41)

Secondly, the concept of religion in a traditional society is necessarily different from that in a complex technological society. In the former, the 'scale of change' is low; in the latter, there is an accelerated 'increase of scale'.(41)

Thirdly, in a situation of religious pluralism, a tension is created between different modes of definitions; and an interaction may take place, leading to a conflict or to the assimilation of one religion by another. Since our study examines the interaction of the traditional ritual system and of Christianity among the Yoruba, these conclusions are vital and will be recalled at various points below.

---

41. cf. R.R. Wilson - "A Typology of Sects in a dynamic and comparative perspective" in Roland Robertson (ed.) Sociology of Religion, Penguin, 1969, pp. 361-383.

42. This distinction is treated by Elizabeth Nothingham; Religion and Society, Randon House, New York, 1954, pp. 9-10, 20-16.
The concept of 'scale of change' has been proposed and carefully analysed by Godfrey and Monica Wilson, The Analysis of Social Change, Cambridge, 1945.

II. THE STUDY OF YORUBA RELIGION.

"In the first place, we shall not expect to understand religion, if we confine ourselves to considering belief in spiritual beings, however the formula may be refined. There may be contexts of inquiry in which we should want to line up all extant beliefs in other beings, nombies, ancestors, demons, fairies, the lot. But following Robertson Smith we should not suppose that in cataloguing the full population of the universe we have necessarily caught the essentials of religion".

Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger, (1966), p. 40.

"Anthropological investigations, studies in religious history, the 'higher criticism' of sacred writings, work in comparative religion, and sociological study of social structures have all demonstrated that we cannot understand a religion scientifically without relating it to society and culture.... Avoid any assumption that religion is always to be regarded as the independent variable 'causing' certain developments in society and culture, or that it is wholly a dependent variable, reflecting its social environment. I do assume that religion is a natural expression of man as an individual and as a member of society ... But religious forces, once set in motion, become part of a complex system of interaction.

J. Milton Yinger, The Scientific Study of Religion, Collier-Macmillan, 1970, pp. 203, 222.

II. THE STUDY OF YORUBA RELIGION

1. THE YORUBA PEOPLE

The Yoruba people whose religious beliefs, practices and institutions form the subject of this study do not need an extensive introduction here since so much ethnographical and historical material is already available about them.(1) Nevertheless, it will be helpful to summarise here a few particulars about the making of the people, their relationship with their neighbours, and their position in contemporary Nigerian society. The relationship between the social and religious history of the people, and particularly the influence of their socio-political history on the historical development of their religion, will be discussed later on.

Historians are now virtually agreed that the area of land roughly from the Niger delta on the west coast of Africa to longitude 1^{o} east, and from the sea coast up to latitude 9^{o} north was by the beginning of the fifteenth century the Yoruba-Aja country.(2) The

---

(1) William Bascom's compact The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria, Holt, Rinchart and Winston Inc., New York, 1969, has a recommended reading list of some forty books and papers on pages 116-118. The following are selected to illustrate the variety of aspects of the life of the Yoruba which have been studied and published. J. F. Ade Ajayi & Robert S. Smith, Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century, Cambridge University Press, 1964. Kevin Carroll, Yoruba Religious Carving, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1967. G.B.A. Coker, Family Property Among the Yoruba, Swete and Maxwell, London, 1956. A.B. Ellis, The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave-Coast of West Africa, Chapman and Hall, London, 1894. Samuel Johnson, The History of the Yorubas, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1920. G.J. Ojo, Yoruba Culture, University of London Press, London. E.B. Idowu, Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief, Longman, Green & Co., London, 1962. J.F.A. Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891, London, 1965.

(2) See I.A. Akinjogbin, Dahomey and Its Neighbours, C.U.P., 1967, pp. 8ff. A.F.C. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, Longmans 1969, pp. 4, 7, 12, 14ff. There is a strong tradition which supports C.K. Meek's contention, "The famous 15th century kingdom of Benin arose out of the exploits of one of the children of Oduduwa." C.K. Meek, Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe, OUP., 1937, p.5.

Yoruba were on the eastern section of this area, and the Aja occupied the western section. Whether they have been there all the time or have moved in from somewhere else by migration is not yet certain. However, from the time they started to come together, probably earlier than the fourteenth century, they began to organise themselves in kingdoms. There were major and minor kingdoms in each section. The main Yoruba kingdoms known as such from the eighteenth century numbered at least twelve. They were Benin, Ekiti, Ondo, Ijesa, Ife, Oyo, Saki, Owu, Ijebu, Egba, Egbado, and Ketu. There were many smaller ones dotted all over the area which included parts of modern Dahomey and Togo. With slight alterations, affecting chiefly Benin and Ketu, these same groups form the major Yoruba section today.

The Yoruba and Their Neighbours

In so far as the figures of the controversial 1963 census in Nigeria can be trusted, the Yoruba, concentrated as they are today in the south-western part of the country, number some ten million people. But there are also many more Yoruba outside the well known Yoruba States of Nigeria. The conquest of some Yoruba towns by the Fulani from the North in a series of jihad during the last century has excised part of the Yoruba people into what is now known as the Kwara State of Nigeria with its capital in Ilorin, traditionally and now still predominantly a Yoruba town.(3) The arbitrary drawing of the international boundaries at the Berlin Conference of 1885 has similarly cut off the Yoruba-speaking peoples who now form a part of Dahomey and Togo. According to Yoruba myths of origin, the people of Ketu now in Dahomey were descended from Alaketu who was himself one of the seven sons of Oduduwa, the founding father of the Yoruba people.

---

(3) R.L.J. Lander, Journals of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger, Vol. 1, London 1832, pp. 189-190.

Farther inland, in Nigeria, the Edo people of Benin share in common ancestry with the Yoruba people. And further west of the country beyond Dahomey and Togo, the Ga in Ghana tell stories of origin which trace their ancestry back to Ile-Ife, the Yoruba city whence seven sons of Oduduwa went into dispersion. Because of the Slave Trade of the nineteenth century, the Yoruba now form substantial sub-groups in Brazil and Cuba.(4) After many years of anthropological study of the Yoruba and other groups in the Americas and the Pacific Islands, Prof. William Bascom has drawn the conclusion that "no African group has had greater influence on New World culture than the Yoruba".(5)

One of the earliest large-scale ethnographical studies of West African peoples was undertaken by Sir. A.B. Ellis. In two separate volumes of his work, he dealt extensively with the Twi and the Ewe of the then Slave Coast (now Ghana). Then he devoted a third volume to the Yoruba and included in it some comparative observations on the social and religious life of the peoples studied.(6) He came to the conclusion at that time that the three groups represented "three stages of progress... and the Yoruba is the highest".(7)

Working within the framework of the evolutionary theory which was in vogue in his day, he drew attention to many facts which led him to the conclusion that the evolution of types had been carried

---

(4) William Bascom, "The Yoruba in Cuba". Nigeria Magazine, No. 37, pp. 14-20.

(5) William Bascom, The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria, 1969, p.1

(6) The Twi-speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa (1887), The Ewe-Speaking Peoples ... (1890), The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples ... (1894).

(7) A.B. Ellis, 1894, pp. 275f.

further among the Yoruba than among the other two groups studied.(8)

Within Nigeria itself, the Yoruba form one of the three largest and politically significant groups. The traditional urban life of the Yoruba distinguishes them from other tribes and has had demonstrated advantages in the administrative adjustments necessary for the transition from tribal life to nation-hood and from local to national political administration. Thus, Yorubaland was the last part of Nigeria to come under British Protectorate as recently as 1914.(9) From the time soon after the coming of the British to Nigeria in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Yoruba have on the one hand formed the vanguard of the army of indigenous 'agents' of European civilisation as civil servants, railway workers, and teachers, etc. On the other hand, they have led the movement towards nationalism and the demand for political self-government. Thus it was that the Yoruba area became the first of the three regions into which Nigeria was then divided to be granted internal self-government in 1958 as a prelude to the eventual national Independence which ultimately came to the country as a whole in 1960.(10).

The Name "Yoruba"

The Yoruba have not always been known by this name which became current only during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The story of how the people came to be so called is too complicated to justify Peel's assertion that it was the Church

---

(8) op. cit. passim, pp. 288-93.

(9) For the treaty with the British Governor-General F.J.D. Lugard, "placing the Egba Kingdom unreservedly under the Government of the Protectorate of Nigeria", see A.K. Ajisafe, History of Abeokuta, Richard Clay & Sons Ltd. Suffolk, 1924, pp. 238-240.

(10) P. C. Lloyd, Africa in Social Change, Penguin, London, 1967, p. 137, 143, 148, 338, passim.

Missionary Society which first brought the name into common use for all the people.(11) Such a summary interpretation hides the long political process of local imperial tactics, intertribal conflicts and eventual British diplomacy which ultimately welded together peoples who, though they claimed to be of the same ancestry in the remote past, yet had developed diverse cultural traditions through the passage of time.

The common language which is now generally known by the same term Yoruba was standardized through the translation of the Yoruba Bible, and became more and more adopted by the different groups as the Bible in that language became increasingly used. The principal translator of the Bible into Yoruba was the Rev. (later Bishop) Samuel Adjai (sic) Crowther. It took him and his colleagues some seventeen years to complete, the first instalment being published in 1850.(12)

Bishop Crowther was an Oyo-Yoruba, having been born in the village of Osoogun near Iseyin, some twenty miles east from modern Oyo. Soon after his first instalment of a Yoruba text of the Bible, he published a Yoruba grammar and vocabulary. This became the basis of an extensive Dictionary which enjoyed great popularity over the years.(13) With the Yoruba Bible and the Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language, Crowther greatly influenced the spread of the Oyo version of the wider language spoken in different dialects by the Oyo, Ekiti, Ijebu, Egba, Egbado and Others. The difficulty experienced by many people up to the 1930s in reading the Yoruba Bible and other publications in the language was due

---

(11) J.D.Y. Peel, Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba, O.U.P., 1968, p. 19.

(12) The Epistle to the Romans in Yoruba came out in 1850, and was followed by Luke, Acts, James and Peter in 1851. The book of Mathew in Yoruba came out in 1853 and was republished separately in 1871 and 1920. Other Epistles including Phillipians through Revelation came into circulation in 1862: Then the whole Bible published under the title of "Bibeli Mimo eyi ni oro Olorun ti Testamenti Lailai ati ti Titun" was put in circulation in 1897. Copies of the different texts are preserved in the British Museum and in the archives of the British and Foreign Bible Society in London.

(13) Samuel Crowther, A Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language, Seeleys, London, 1852, 287 pages.

primarily to the divergence between the local dialects used normally at home, in friendly conversations or in local trading transactions, and the Oyo-Yoruba version which was used in the Bible and in other Yoruba books and which thus became more and more standardized. This version was at first the language of Church and School, of Christian religion and the education which came with it. It led to ultimate adoption of a common language instead of many different dialects and thus contributed more than anything else to the creation of the people as one cultural group.

Going back to the time when variations of language were the norm, there existed also local variability in cultural beliefs and practices. But the combined contributions of increased and improved communication and transportation, political unification following the tribal wars together with the development of a single language - in short, an increase in the scale of society - have helped to produce a common cultural pattern of traditional religion, morality and outlook. At the same time, however, it is still necessary to look for variations in religious practices which may have been preserved from the earlier days. Though they are one people and speak the same language in different dialects, each group has preserved until today its distinctive religious traditions and practices.

2. PREVIOUS STUDIES OF YORUBA RELIGION

The stage has now been reached when it becomes necessary to consider systematically previous studies of Yoruba traditional religion and to evaluate them in the light of both the academic context within which their authors worked and the practical objectives entertained by each. Without this, the works of previous scholars would be quoted only indiscriminately and the endeavour to see Yoruba religion in relation to Christianity might be vitiated.

From the time when some Portuguese sailors first called at Lagos in 1472[14] to the middle of the nineteenth century when Christian missionary activities started to bring the Yoruba more into the modern world, great interest has been shown in the religious beliefs and rituals of the Yoruba. Nevertheless, it was not until the end of last century that the first careful study of the subject was undertaken. The different writers and scholars who have written on this subject from 1890 onwards can be divided into three categories.

First, there were administrators who with practical political objectives made a study of the people whom their governments sought to colonize. Then there were travellers and explorers whose primary motive was curiosity or sensational journalism. Such writers, on the whole, wrote before the scientific study of religion became properly established on either the historical or anthropological levels, not to speak of the more recent emphases on sociological or psychological levels. The works of writers in this group have unfortunately provided the illustrative materials used not only in James Frazer's The Golden Bough but even also in Hasting's Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. In this group of writers are Col. (later Sir) A.B. Ellis, R.E. Dennett, and the traveller Mary Kingsley.

The second group of pioneer writers on Yoruba religion consists of early anthropologists like the German Leo Frobenius, P. Amaury Talbot and C.K. Meek who, because they belonged to a later generation, were able to take into consideration some of the new insights into the history of religion. There was, however, only one predominant theory in the field, that inherited from the classical study of early Greek Religion; and this was applied extensively and indiscriminately

---

(14) Quinn-Young and White, A History for Nigerian Schools, Teachers' Book 2, Evans Brothers Ltd., London 1961 edition, p. 35.

to the study of the Yoruba.(15)

Members of the third group are the most important for our purpose. They were either European or African missionaries whose objective was to make a comparison between traditional religion and Christianity, though the earliest of them wrote their treatises even before comparative religion became a science. Before then, the "investigation into concepts of deity and observation of rituals"(16) among the Yoruba was done only as a part of the general study of the customs, traditions and culture of the people. The first 'comparative religion' study in the Yoruba situation known to us was that of E.M. Lijadu published in 1897. He wrote in the Yoruba language and quoted extensively from Ifá myths. Lijadu was followed by James Johnson who later became bishop and whose work was published in 1899. By way of anticipation, it can be stated at this point that the works of these and other early Yoruba authors on Yoruba religion have not been given enough credit though they have been used extensively by some modern writers.

S.S. Farrow whose thesis was published in 1926, knew of these two, as he included them in his bibliography, though he listed Lijadu only by his later edition of 1901. It is significant for our purpose that James Johnson entitled his work Yoruba Heathenism, with an edition translated into Yoruba under the title Isin Orisa Bibo ni Ile Yoruba. Farrow's title was Faith, Fancies, and Fetich: Yoruba Paganism, and he took cognisance of the simultaneous existense of "Paganism, Mohammedanism and Christianity" in West Africa.

Among a class of theological students at Wesley College, Ibadan, in the early '40s, the idea was current that by Faith, Farrow meant

---

(15) Leo Frobenius, it must be acknowledged, brought a greater open-mindedness and objectivity into his study. Strangely enough, it was for this very reason that the German universities refused to accept his work for a doctorate degree. Materials for a Frobenius Centenary Exhibition mounted by the German Embassies in Africa in 1973 celebrated the fact that in spite of this, Frobenius ultimately became an academic institution by himself in Germany.

(16) Parrinder 1949, p. 1.

Christianity; by Fancies, he meant Islam; and by Fetich, he meant traditional religion. We now consider this view to be wrong for two reasons. First, the subtitle "Yoruba Paganism" seems to refer to the main title, Faith, Fancies and Fetich, as a whole. Secondly, and more important, Farrow himself wrote: "the two latter (Christianity and Islam) are foreign introductions, and do not come within the scope of this treatise, which deals only with the first, the indigenous religion of the Yoruba tribes."(17) We take it therefore that, for Farrow, Yoruba traditional religion is an amalgam of Faith, Fancies and Fetich, apparently in descending order, but all simultaneously existing within the same religious system. Enough recognition has not been given to this insight.

Yoruba traditional religion certainly has a strong element of "Faith" in God together with "faith in life", a faith which sustains life itself. At the same time, it has many "Fancies", in the form of various moderate or wild speculations as to the cosmological nature of the universe: many superstitions, some of which instil fear and are therefore crippling; and many others which have been used as the basis for genuine human relationships, political action and social control. Then there is, at the same time, the evidence of "Fetich" as a series of manipulative actions, objects and devices which are meant to control the forces of nature and the multifarious spiritual influences to which man is believed to be subjected.

It has been strongly argued that the terms Fetich and Fetichism be dropped from anthropological usage about the Yoruba.(18) The suggestion has been based mainly on a justifiable attempt to call attention to the existence of genuine faith in God and the knowledge of God in tribal Africa; and to show that the religious life of African peoples cannot be said to consist only in Fetichism as has previously been thought. But if the argument is extended to the suggestion that

---

(17) S.S. Farrow, Faith, Fancies and Fetish, SPCK, London, 1926, p. 4.

(18) E.S. Waterhouse, The Dawn of Religion, Epworth Press, London, 1936, pp. 61f. Parrinder, 1949, pp. 8-10. Idowu, 1962, pp. 64-67.

there is no Fetichism in African or Yoruba religious life, the evidence simply refutes this. Faith, superstition, and fetichism in the sense of charms are intricately bound together in the Yoruba religious situation. Many forms of Folk Christianity embody the same mixture.

Edwin Smith[19] has in his own way pointed to three phases of African religious practice, namely: theism, spiritism, and dynamism. He is saying the same thing as Farrow, through in different accents; Farrow in evaluative, and Edwin Smith in essentialist, accents. Also, Edwin Smith has apparently arranged his own analysis in a determined descending order. The fact that he has even described dynamism as "the lowest level of religion" supports this descending evolutionary analysis. It is in the third or highest level of belief that we find theistic ideas. However, the three are always found together. It is these three together, and not any one of them in isolation, which in the African context are to be designated as traditional religion. This means, of course, that religion as an identifiable category restricted primarily to the theistic is a categorization which is generally not made by the Yoruba or other Africans.

Until 1949 when Parrinder's West African Religion was published, the study of Yoruba traditional religion involves little more than cataloguing the rites and festivals found among the people, and of the supposed gods or goddesses believed to be in association with the Supreme Being. Dr. Parrinder's work was the first attempt to bring some systematization into the study of these rites and the divinities associated with them. His book quickly became a textbook for the study of traditional religions in West Africa. This was inevitable since no one before him had taught West African religion in any University. It was he who worked out a course which he taught in

---

(19) E.W. Smith (ed), African Ideas of God, Edinburgh House Press, 1950, pp. 15-30.

the University College of Ibadan (now known as the University of Ìbàdan) under the academic patronage of the University of London.

Archdeacon Lucas,[20] who wrote about the same time, was much preoccupied with the effort to resurrect and rehabilitate the diffusionist theory which traced the origin of religious beliefs and practices in West Africa to Egypt. As for anthropological and comparative religious emphases, he adopted a general position which has already been discredited.[21]

Professor E. Bolaji Idowu, whose thesis was supervised by Professor Parrinder, concentrated only on the idea of God. Assuming the same definition of religion as Parrinder's but working more from within a monotheistic position, his Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief (1962) reduced the plethora of divinities, cults and religious beliefs to a single system deriving from the 'Supreme Being' Olódùmarè.[22] So, on the whole, the field from 1949 was held chiefly by Professor Parrinder.

What theory of religion did Parrinder bring into the writing of his West African Religion? We suggest that it was the theistic theory of religion based on Tylor's celebrated definition: "belief in spiritual beings and the practices related thereto". From this basis, Parrinder deals primarily with belief in spiritual beings, classified into four categories: (a) a Supreme God described as supreme because of the recognition of the existence of other gods; (b) the chief divinities, usually non-human divinities often associated with natural forces; (c) divinized ancestors of the clan; and (d) what others have called fetiches, but which Parrinder

---

(20) J.O. Lucas, The Religion of the Yorubas, Lagos, 1948.

(21) For a small but competent publication expressing general support for Lucas' philological position, see Modupe Oduyoye, The Vocabulary of Yoruba Religious Discourse, Daystor Press, Ibadan, 1972.

(22) The term 'Supreme God', frequently used in this connection, is ambiguous as it gives the impression, in the context of the discussion of polytheism, that the one so called supreme was one of the other divinities. The term 'Supreme Being' is somehow freer of this ambiguity.

preferred to term charms and amulets.(23) Even this last category becomes an item within the general concept of divinity, since it is held that the charms are practised "with a profound belief in a spiritual universe".(24) Thus Parrinder's classification became a victim of his monolithic theory of religion.

Parrinder himself noted that the classification "represents well-known distinctions used by polytheists".(25) It is fundamentally an intellectualist and theological classification suitably devised for a polytheistic system. The concept of polytheism itself has no other than a theistic reference both etymologically and philosophically. The inadequacy of this theistic or theological frame of reference became evident in the study itself, particularly when it was soon discovered and had to be pointed out early in the book that, in so far as the concept of the Supreme God was concerned, the Yoruba system represented a "belief without worship."(26)

This theory has held the field all along. It dominated the study of the History of Religion and demonstrated the debt of that discipline to the study of the Classics. Dr. Edwin Smith, who wrote the Foreword to Parrinder's West African Religion, drew attention extensively to the parallels between the religious beliefs of West Africa and those of Rome, Greece and Egypt.(27) Parrinder himself alluded to this in a few places.(28) As Ulli Beier has written, "The comparison with the Greek pantheon is particularly misleading, because we know little about the Greek gods as magic forces and our image of them has been formed by a Greek literature that has reduced

---

(23) op. cit. 1961 edition, p. 11.

(24) ibid. p. 157.

(25) ibid. p. 12.

(26) ibid. pp. 19-25, and passim.

(27) ibid. pp. xi-xiii.

(28) ibid. pp. 11, 126.

the original symbols to mere dramatis personae".(29)

With or without the comparison with Greek gods and goddesses, the Òrìsà are already taken to be personalised forces to whom placatory rituals are offered and into whose communion worshippers enter through rites and ceremonies. Many of the ceremonies are now fast disappearing and in a number of cases the details of particular ceremonies are no longer extant because worshippers have rejected the explanations usually given to justify the ceremonies. So far, not much attempt has been made towards developing a systematic arrangement of the òrìsà based on the mythological geneaology of the gods or on a ritual calendar of festivals and ceremonies connected with them.(30)

Judith Gleason, Ulli Beier and others have called attention to, and have started an exploration into, a line of interpretation which regards the Òrìsà not as 'divinities' or gods and goddesses but rather as characterization of natural forces and human attributes. "They are like immense magnifying mirrors in which we behold ourselves as potentialities. Properly speaking, òrìsà ought not to be called gods at all. They are forces, living attributes, revelations, dramatizations of a complicated religious idea for which we in our land (i.e. Europe and America) have no real equivalent".(31) This insight has not yet influenced any academic study of the Òrìsà.

Thus, from Bowen and Ellis up to Parrinder and Idowu, each writer based his description mainly on the definition of religion as belief in spiritual beings. The writers thus sought to identify what spiritual beings were evident in the myths and religious observances of the people. The climax was reached with Parrinder classifying such

---

(29) Ulli Beier, The Return of the Gods: The Sacred Art of Susanne Wenger, pp. 34-35. I am deeply grateful to Prof. Chief Ulli Beier who made available to me and permitted me to quote from his manuscript since published by Cambridge University Press, 1975.

(30) Judith Gleason, 1971; and Ulli Beier, A Year of Sacred Festivals in one Yoruba Town, Lagos, 1960, may be taken as the first steps towards such a less speculative approach to the study of the Yoruba òrìsà cults.

(31) J. Gleason, op. cit. pp. 112-113. Ulli Beier, Return of the Gods, pp. 30f.

spiritual beings into the groups outlined above, and Idowu contending strongly for the supreme position of Ọlọdumare among all the rest.(32)

A useful assessment of the development in the study of Yoruba religion during the past quarter of a century can be made by examining carefully at what different points Parrinder has revised his various conclusions during the first decade after 1949. His earliest book on the subject was published in that year, and his revisions started in 1961. Other books and articles on the subject were published until 1971. On the whole, we see Parrinder certainly struggling during these two decades with the theory of religion as "belief in spiritual beings", but at the same time being confronted with material which does not fit into the theory; especially at a time when other scholars, particularly in the area of social anthropology, were casting serious doubt on the theory itself.(33)

It is true that in this first edition in 1949, Parrinder updated the study of Yoruba traditional religion and brought it within the theoretical framework of the history of religion. But the past twenty-five years have seen an advance in the study of the history of religion, anthropology, and in the comparative study of religion. In the light of this, the following critical points can now be made.

---

(32) This is further discussed by Idowu, 1973, pp. 137-202.

(33) Attention is called particularly to the theoretical approaches represented by S. F. Nadel's Nupe Religion, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1954; M. Fortes Oedipus and Job in West African Religion, Cambridge, 1959; and Robin Horton's "The Kalabari World-View: An Outline and Interpretation", Africa, xxxii 13, 1962, pp. 197-220. For a wider survey of the work of social anthropologists and others in this field during the period under review, see Adrian Edwards C.S.Sp., "The Study of Religion in West Africa 1959-69", Religion: Journal of Religion and Religions, Vol. 11/1, 1971.

Firstly, Parrinder did not stop to define religion or the scope of the religious. With Lucas (1948) and Parrinder (1949), the influence of "comparative religion" started to be felt more strongly. From this point, the category of religion, as an area for phenomenological concentration and specialization was introduced into Yoruba studies.

But what does it mean to study"West African Religion"? Parrinder used the phrase but did not stop to define what is religious.(34) That is, the question needs to be asked; what do we mean by religion? What and how much ground does it cover? What is its place in society? Is it co-extensive with culture or the people's world-view or does it go beyond them? Is it distinguishable from magic? Are magic and religion parts of each other?

When Parrinder writes "Religion is a fundamental, perhaps the most important, influence in the life of most West Africans",(35) what does he mean by religion? He could mean a god-oriented outlook with associated behaviour. But does this exhaust the possibilities or cover all the levels of experience which might be described as 'religious'? Some of these questions have been discussed above, but they are reiterated here to emphasise that those who started to use the concept in the title of their works some quarter of a century ago should have stopped to examine and define it.

Secondly, the relative position of religious belief and ritual practices in West African religion was not indicated. Thirdly, the question of "categories" in traditional religions demands a very careful examination. In this respect, it should be noted that Parrinder himself subsequently raised the question of the theoretical basis of the religious belief, suggesting that ontologically it

---

(34) See Robert D. Baird, Category Formation And the History of Religions, Mouton, The Hague, 1971, pp. 2ff.

(35) Op. cit. 1961, pp. 2f.

consists of what Placide Tempels had earlier described as vital force or dynamism.

Dynamism is a metaphysical or ontological concept which provides an alternative to the Greek concept of being which has all along been the basis for Christian theology. This theory is objective without unduly positing animatism or even a soul. It explains nature-gods, magic, taboo, totemism, etc. without the evolutionary preoccupation of previous generations which saw mana, dynamism, animatism, animism, etc. as more or less historical stages.(36) Later, Parrinder himself pleaded for it.(37) He introduced the concept of dynamism in a later revision of his West African Religion without actually drawing out its implications for the whole book.(38)

Fourthly, we might ask whether in any particular situation we are dealing with one religion or with several religions. This is especially important among the Yoruba. The typology of religion can be illuminated by the typology of sects. The question arises whether Ifá, Ògún, Òbàtálá, Sàngó, etc., are to be treated as different religious systems or as subsidiary aspects of one single religious system. This was not done.

---

(36) E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Theories of Primitive Religion, O.U.P., 1965, pp. 31ff.

(37) In his article on "Monotheism and Pantheism in Africa", Parrinder traced the advocacy for the concept of Dynamism by Tempels, Kagame, E.W. Smith, Lienhardt and L.V. Thomas of Dakar. He concluded: "I wish that more attention had been paid to my use of Tempels during the last twenty years, because solutions to the problems of diversity may lie in that philosophy of powers" (1970, p. 87).

(38) For Parrinder's own advocacy of the concept of Dynamism, see West African Religion, 1949, pp. 16f; West African Psychology, 1951, pp. 8f.; Religion in Africa, 1969, pp. 26f. "Monotheism and Pantheism", 1970, pp. 81-88.

Leaving the Parrinder school, we must now look back in time to the description of Yoruba religion in the much earlier classic history of the Yoruba by Samuel Johnson.(39) Here we note a socio-historical emphasis which is scarcely evident in the other descriptions. However, Samuel Johnson wrote mainly of the Oyo people to whom the name Yoruba previously applied.(40) The question which arises as to when and how the different religious ideas and observances became generally widespread among other Yoruba people has not yet been faced. No doubt, there has been a local diffusionism of religious ideas and observances spreading from Ilé-Ifé and Oyo. The first factor making this possible was the migration of Odudúwa children as accepted by all Yoruba, including Edo and Dahomeans. This will be discussed in the section below. Then there was the wholesale movement of peoples necessitated by the many Yoruba wars which dominated the nineteenth century, with consequent inter-marriage.

Afolabi Ojo's treatment stands in a class by itself.(41) He is a geographer with special interest in Human Geography and has from this position written a book on Yoruba Culture. Religious beliefs and practices of the people are therefore put in the setting of the people's agricultural methods and observances. Thus, according to Ojo, the traditional religion of the Yoruba had its significance mainly in the agricultural and other vocational life of the people. The Nature-Myth theory upon which

---

(39) Samuel Johnson's History of the Yorubas was the first definitive written history of the people. An introduction written by his brother, Dr. O. Johnson, tells the curious circumstances which almost prevented its publication. Apparently, it contained too much evidence against the view then being popularised that those under colonial rule were people who had no history!

(40) Samuel Johnson generalized the history of the Oyo group for the history of all the Yoruba, though in his case he could possibly claim that he was writing of the Oyo people and those who came under their rule. Scholars of Yoruba religion, on the contrary, have generalized the religious history of the Ife for the whole of all the people later called Yoruba. It is time that this indiscriminate writing of social or religious history should be replaced by a more "scientific study of religion".

(41) Afolabi Ojo, Yoruba Culture, University of London Press, 1966.

he depended has its functional and dynamistic dimensions. In this context, it has been easy to treat the "spiritual beings" as "nature divinities".

What is common to these different groups of descriptions, however, is their dependence on a putative definition of religion. One methodological conclusion which has to be repeated here and which comes to confirm the total anthropological method advocated by E.E. Evans-Pritchard is that the history of religion ought always to be studied in relation to the history of the people themselves.(42) We might even say that the religion neither of a person nor of a community can be properly understood without an adequate consideration of the history of that person or of that community. All the available evidence goes to strengthen the case for our contention that though the metaphysical or ontological context is important, the socio-historical has considerable significance, and the experiential is basic. These must constantly be looked for in an objective study of any religion.

3. A HISTORICAL STUDY OF YORUBA RELIGION

(a) Ile-Ife Legends of Origin

The legends of Yoruba origin present conflicting accounts of the sources, ethnic relationships, and original homesteads of the Yoruba people. One set of myths based on the holy city of Ile-Ife credits the place with being not only the cradle of the Yoruba from where the Yoruba people dispersed to the different parts where they are now represented, but the cradle also of life and of all the nations of the world.(43) A Yoruba aphorism refers to Ile-Ife as the place from where light comes into the whole world,

---

(42) E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Nuer Religion. O.U.P., 1956, pp. 314f, Theories of Primitive Religion, O.U.P., 1965, pp. 111f. A number of Evans-Pritchard's students and followers have developed and expounded this methodology in greater detail. E.G. John Beattie, Other Cultures: Aims, Methods and Chievements in Social Anthropology, Routledge Paperback, 1966, (first published 1964), pp. 49-64, 67f.

(43) William Bascom, Op. cit., 1969, pp. 5, 11f.

not only ab initio, but as a daily occurence with the rising sun.(44)

The Ife legends are the better known of the two or three main varieties of stories of origin, and the Yoruba cultural excellence which has impressed the world of art since the early years of this century belongs to the Ife tradition.(45) The Ife bronzes and pottery, which are found in museums in Europe and America and which continue to reward archaeological excavations still in process around Ile-Ife, are the pride of the Yoruba and a revelation of their history and cultural background.

Oduduwa myths. The spread of the Yoruba people to the different parts of south-western Nigerian and of Dahomey has been explained in the myths by accounts of the local migration of Oduduwa's seven children. What the people were called at that time, or what they called themselves, history does not tell us. But they were not then called Yoruba. Under different circumstances, they called themselves "the sons of Odùduwà" or 'ènìà' ('people', 'those who are chosen'), or 'olùkù mi' (my friends).

Various versions of the Yoruba creation story exist. They all assume a direct traffic between heaven and earth, so that Yoruba creation stories all speak of a creation by agency. From the stories narrated by different elders and cult leaders, E. Adememi

---

(44) Ilé-Ifè is about fifty miles from Ibadan, the capital of the Oyó State of the Federation of Nigeria.

(45) Radiocarbon datings together with oral tradition have placed the growth of Ife art in a flourishing continuity from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries. See Frank Willet, African Art, Thames and Hudson, London 1971. In S.O. Biobaku (ed.), Sources of Yoruba History, O.U.P. 1973, pp. 111-175, an authoritative discussion of archaeological work on Yoruba art in wood and metal is undertaken by three experts in the field: Frank Willet, Dennis Williams and Fr. Kelvin F. Carroll. Well-reproduced plates of specimens of Ife bronzes can be found in William Fagg, The Art of Western Africa, Fontana Unesco Art Books 1967.

Kényo has made a composite version combining an Ódùdùwà story, an Òrìsà story, and a bird (hen or a dove) story.(46) These elements could very well have been the nuclei of three different independent creation-stories.

Two particular traditions are outstanding though they have frequently been conflated into one. Of the two, one gives prominence to Ódùdùwà as the first man. The other gives pride of place to Òrúnmìlà. In either case, the first man came down from heaven with Òbàtálá, the agent of Ólódùmarè (God Almighty) in the creation of man and other living creatures. It is significant that the tradition which accorded Òbàtálá a permanent sojourn on the earth has not attributed to him fatherhood of real sons and daughters who lived like men among men. Whenever we asked the question who were the children of Òbàtálá, the reply always was 'we all, because it was he who moulded every human being'. In contrast, tradition says that both Ódùdùwà and Òrúnmìlà were not personified forces, but real human earth-dwellers having extensive stories told about their human experiences, with children who themselves were human and not divine beings.

The Ódùdùwà version is part of a mythological charter of tribes and clan-heads. Ódùdùwà was a kind of crown prince in heaven. He was sent to carve a 'kingdom' for himself out of the watery waste which was then the earth. He had sixteen divinities or personified heavenly beings (òrìsà) with him as his companions and servants. As already suggested above, it was one of the òrìsà who effected the creation of the earth. A variant story has it that Ódùdùwà contrived to do this by carrying some laterite and some

---

(46) E. Ademoṃi Kenyo, Origin of the Progenitor of the Yoruba Race, Lagos, 1950, p. 9. cf. William Bascom, Op. cit., 1969, p. 10.

pieces of iron from heaven together with a hen. On descent, he placed the iron pieces on the water and put the laterite on the pieces of iron. Solid earth was made by the hen scratching the laterite thus spreading it. Ile-Ife is literally "the place of the spreading", and it is still today the name of the sacred town where the spreading which effected the creation of the earth took place. Thus was the creation of Ife accounted for.(47)

The creation of man does not need to be accounted for separately in this version as a retinue of males and females came with Oduduwa to the earth. The rest of the mythological charter tells how the sixteen (some say seven) "sons" of Oduduwa moved out of Ife and became clan heads and founders of kingdoms.

Each clan of the Yoruba people has found a place for itself in the charter of these sixteen or seven children of Oduduwa.(48) Belief in Oduduwa as the progenitor of the Yoruba people has had the effect of binding together the Yoruba people wherever they may be found.(49) The founders of one of the strong political parties in independent Nigeria, the Action Group, first formed an Association of the Children of Oduduwa (Egbe Omo Oduduwa) as a cultural organisation to provide a sentimental springboard for the political party.

According to another group of stories, Oduduwa migrated from somewhere in the region of the lower Nile, and historical evidence of particular migrations has been shown to correspond with the oral tradition. For example, Biobaku suggests two waves of migration to bring the Yoruba from their original homes in Upper Egypt or

---

(47) E.B. Idowu, Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief, Longmans, 1962 pp. 22f.

(48) A.K. Ajisafe, Op. cit., pp. 10f. N.A. Fadipe, The Sociology of the Yoruba, Ibadan University Press, 1970, p. 35.

(49) It is significant that as far away as Brazil, when a programme of Yoruba studies was newly established in the Bahia University and it was decided to produce the first Yoruba play in that University, the play was one entitled Oduduwa àti àwon òmò rè - "Oduduwa and his children".

beyond.(50) The first migration, according to this suggestion, was part of the Kisra migrations in the 7th century A.D. which settled the Yoruba around Idah and in the Ekiti country. The second was the Oduduwa migration at the end of the 10th century A.D. which settled more Yoruba in Ile-Ife. Of course this is a "diffusionist" explanation, but it crops up in various forms and will be referred to later in this thesis.

New research in recent years has raised serious doubts about the historicity of Oduduwa and his place in history, if he ever existed.(51) Oduduwa may be a myth in the sense that the details of the stories told about him and his children may not be historically true or accurate. Be that as it may, it still remains historically true that the myth has created the Yoruba people and some of their neighbours. The question of truth in religious historical research has to distinguish between the historicity of particular events and the history of the impact of particular religious beliefs. For the latter case, it is not essential to stop to prove the historicity of the events which constitute the elements of belief. What is important is to recognize that the belief is held by people at a particular point in history or over a particular period in history, and to look for the possible functions the belief has served or the influence it has exercised.

---

(50) S.O. Biobaku, The Origin of the Yoruba, University of Lagos, 1971, pp. 20-23. Kemi Morgan's The Myth of Yoruba Ancestry, Ibadan n.d., worked out in true diffusionist manner the details of such migration, drawing linguistic parallels similar to those found in the works of J.O. Lucas. This is the peril of this migration theory. The subject is discussed by R.W. Wescott, "Did the Yoruba come from Egypt?", Odu, Ibadan, No. 4. n.d.

(51) Doubts about the historicity of Oduduwa as an individual person have been dismissed by R.S. Smith, Kingdoms of the Yoruba, Methuen, London 1969, pp. 99-100: "Every movement has its leaders, and it is their names which are usually recollected". cf, also O.E.I. Aimiuwu, "Oduduwa", Nigeria Magazine, Nos. 107-109, December 1970 - August 1971, pp. 85-90.

Obatala and Oduduwa. Reference has been made above to Obatala as an agent of Olodumare in the creation of the earth. Obatala moulded the shape and form, while Olodumare declared the fiat which meant life and personal identity. Incidentally, the creation of man is said to have taken place in heaven and is supposed still to take place in heaven in every individual case in the process of continuing creation. A kind of metaphysical connection is supposed to exist between the earth and that "presence" of Olodumare where creation takes place and to which the name heaven has been attached. As such, we are not left with the possibility of asking "if they were created in heaven, how do they come to earth?", a phrasing which assumes an 'up there' heaven. However, an 'up there' heaven was assumed in the story of the creation of the earth and all that it contains. Obatala descended on a chain down to the watery mass on which he created solid earth.

On closer examination, it is evident that there has been a grand mix-up between the story of Obatala and those of Oduduwa and also between the personalities and events which they represented. The Obatala stories have to be regarded as the older ones connected with the myths of the origin of the earth. The Oduduwa stories should be taken as later, representing a migrant Oduduwa who invaded and conquered the people among whom Obatala myths, culture and cultism were current. Ulli Beier has suggested that Oduduwa conquered the land but "could not destroy the ancient god of the original owners of the land. To establish a claim to the land however, the myths of the creation of land are sometimes told with Obatala's name replaced by that of Oduduwa or that of Oduduwa's son Oranmiyan. These are later variants, intended to establish the

right of the newcomers".(52)

Ritual plays dramatised during the annual festifal of Obatala commemorate this invasion of Obatala land by Oduduwa. In the rituals, Obatala is depicted as being driven out of the town. Then, three weeks later, as the festival continues, he is received back to town in triumph. This certainly is a post-invasion element in the Obatala rituals starting from Ile-Ife and spreading to other towns among the Yoruba.

We have noted above that the first person to settle in Ile-Ife was variously named Oduduwa or Orunmila. The Oduduwa story is more popular and has been treated above.

Orunmila and Oduduwa. Orunmila has been credited with the invention or discovery of the Ifa divinatory system, with the related Odu corpus of legends, some of which contain stories of Orunmila's own children and disciples, his life and experiences which are later used as models to guide other human beings.

Leopold Senghor, on a visit to Ile-Ife to receive a honorary degree conferred on him by the University of Ife, made a moving reference in his address to Oduduwa as "the man of Ife". He said:

---

(52) Quoted from Ulli Beier, "Obatala: Five Myths of the Yoruba Creator God", Black Orpheus, No. 7, June 1960, Ibadan, p. 35. See also, Ulli Beier, A Year of Sacred Festivals, Lagos, 1959, pp. 14-15. Stories relating Obatala to Oduduwa are related by several writers who do not necessarily give any attention to the contradictions and inconsistencies or explain them in terms of the historical invasions or migration, e.g. E.B. Idowu, op. cit., 1962 pp. 18-29. M.A. Makinde, Ilé-Ife: An Introduction, Ibadan, December 1970, pp. 7-9. Other versions make Obatala the wife of Oduduwa, e.g. as cited by J.O. Lucas, The Religion of the Yoruba, Lagos 1948, pp. 93-5.

"This particular man used the most authentic form of writing. He had no need to make books or build museums. His function was to express life through prayer and art, by symbolism. Thus he helped other men, all men, to lead a better life." Then he prayed in conclusion for the University community, "Grant them the vision of the man of Ife".(53) Senghor has apparently combined in a picturesque way two of the great personalities reputed to have been involved each in his own unique way in the origin of the Yoruba. Senghor's "the man of Ife" is both Oduduwà and Orunmila combined - the one to whom is credited the ancestry of the Yoruba, and the other who is acclaimed to be the embodiment and mediator of the wisdom, insight and pragmatism needed for coping adequately with the human situation.

(b) Sango and the rise of Oyo

Later stories connected a number of Yoruba people with that other city of Oyo which from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries (c. 1650-1837 A.D.) was the centre of the Yoruba kingdom and civilization, stretching inland to Benin within Nigeria and westward along the coast beyond Dahomey and Togoland.(54) One of the Yoruba kings who ruled in Oyo was named Sango. Round his personality has grown a political and religious cult which has spread to many different parts of Yorubaland.

There are many cycles of Sango stories in circulation. Frobenius identified two of them as the primary ones. From this he drew the conclusion that there were two Sango, one from Borgu on the River Niger and the other from Nupe rather north of that river.(55) Idowu

---

(53) Daily Times, Lagos, 18th December, 1972, quoted in "Frank Talk" by Omo Oye.

(54) The problem of the chronology of Yoruba history is discussed carefully by R.S. Smith, Op. cit. pp. 101-106. The date of A.D. 1650 for the rise to power of Oyo has been suggested by Basil Davidson, A History of West Africa 1000-1800, Longman, 1967, pp. 119, 213, 311.

(55) Leo Frobenius, The Voice of Africa, Vol. 1, Hutchinson, London, 1913, p. 210.

has attempted to coalesce the different Sango into one divinity, though he conceded that the personal characteristics and metaphysical principles connected with another divinity, Jakuta, came to be ascribed to Sango.(56) Further research is necessary into the many myths and historical traditions associated with the name.

The Sango to whom we refer here is the one recorded by the Oyo historian Samuel Johnson as the fourth Alaafin (King) of Oyo.(57) The founding of the older ancient Yoruba towns is estimated to be about A.D. 1000 with the founding of Oyo between 1170 and 1300. The rise of Oyo as a power however is dated roughly about A.D. 1650. What is not yet clear beyond doubt is whether Sango was a ruler in the ancient Oyo era or in the later Old Oyo era, that is post-1300 or post -1650. But that Sango was an historical figure is indisputable.

From all accounts, Sango was a tyrannical ruler. He did not depend upon the psychic qualities of his kingship, but resorted to the use of malignant medicine to frighten his chiefs and subjects into submission to his authority. His wife, Oya, also shared in his medicinal knowledge and prowess. Naturally, the people revolted against him and he hanged himself. His supporters continued to fight his cause, especially against their opponents who taunted them with the memory of his suicide by hanging. Apparently the supporters, like their master, had medicinal means by which to reek havoc in retaliation against their enemies. The means they used was arson, especially during rain and thunder-storms. If the lightning struck the house of any who had said Sango hanged himself, Sango's followers would persuade the victim to believe that the lightning

---

(56) E.B. Idowu, Op. cit., 1962, pp. 92-94.

(57) Samuel Johnson, The History of the Yorubas, Lagos, 1921, pp. 43. N.A. Fadipe, Sociology of the Yoruba, p. 263 makes Sango the first Alafin of Oyo. It is to be noted that other writers refer to Sango as the third rather than the fourth king of Oyo. e.g. Judith Gleason, Orisha, the Gods of Yorubaland, New York, 1971, pp. 3, 63f.

was Sango's way of retaliation. The necessary act of reparation was to confess that Sango did not hang himself (Sango ko so). Koso quickly became a slogan to be shouted as a protection against lightning and the anger of Sango. The place where Sango was supposed to have hanged himself became a cultic centre named Koso. The cult quickly spread far and wide.(58)

Idowu has attributed the spread of the Sango cult to a "hybridization" which took place between the Sango cult and that of an earlier Yoruba solar divinity mythically connected with thunderstones Jakuta. He writes, "but it is certain that if this subtle hybridization had not happened, Sango would have been no more than an ancestor in the same category as the other ancestral kings, perhaps a little more propitiated because of his strong character".(59) This observation has not taken account of the historical political development which followed Sango's death and which was both part of and an instrument of the rise of the Oyo kingdom.

The cult of Sango spread beyond Oyo because it was deliberately used for political purposes by Sango's followers and because it was politically protected and fostered. An understanding of the administrative pattern of the Oyo Kingdom is necessary to appreciate this.

Oyo royalty was as much religious as secular; its maintenance depended as much on spiritual as on military strategy. In the heyday of the power of the Oyo kingdom, the Alaafin appointed official representatives to supervise local administration in the different provinces. These officials usually came from among the Ilari, men descended from those who were originally palace slaves and whose loyalty could not be called into question. Their administrative task was collecting tributes for the Alaafin and

---

(58) Judith Gleason, Op. cit., pp. 58-78. Harold Courlander, Tales of Yoruba Gods and Heroes, Crown Publishers, Inc., New York, 1973, pp. 79-82, 91-100.

(59) Op. cit. 1962 p. 94.

ensuring that plots against the Alaafin's rule where nipped in the bud. With this they combined the religious duty of spreading, enforcing and protecting the Sàngó cult. In many cases, the resident Ilari administrators were at the same time Sango priests.(60) Thus, the Sango cult was deliberately fostered and used for political objectives. Its persistence and maintenance, however, depended on the medicinal techniques associated with its observance and on the fear of retribution instilled into the hearts of adherents and others.

Obatala and Sango. Those who were responsible for spreading the Sango cult would certainly have to contend with the popular Obatala cult which went back to time immemorial, the time before Oduduwa, and expressing the fact of its invincibility even in the face of an Oduduwa take-over of the land. The contention between Obatala worshippers and the vanguard of the cult of Sango was depicted in later myth and ritual plays. Such myths speak of Obatala and Sango as being friends.(61) The story is told that Obatala once decided to pay a visit to his friend, Sango, and insisted on going in spite of oracular predictions of an ill-fated journey. It happened that as he got near his friend's kingdom, he saw his friend's horse which had escaped and took it in order to return it to his friend Sango. Sango's servants who did not recognise him took him for a thief. They held him and put him in prison where he languished for seven years. During the period, however, Sango's kingdom was struck by climatic misfortunes which made life in society miserable. When consulted, the oracle pointed to an innocent man languishing in jail. Sango later identified his friend Obatala and had him released. This myth and the ritual plays connected with it establish the Obatala cult as being only one among others, able to

---

(60) Basil Davidson, Op. cit. pp. 180f. 213f. A.L. Mabogunje and J. Omer-Cooper, Owu in Yoruba History, Ibadan University Press, 1971, p. 17.

(61) Harold Courlander, Op. cit. pp 83-86. Judith Gleason, Op. cit., pp. 30-40.

assert its lasting quality only through its moral strength, particularly loyalty, patience and long-suffering.(62) If Obatala represents Ile-Ife and Sango represents Oyo, the implication for social history and relationships among the Yoruba is clearly that Ile-Ife has to accept being just one among other Yoruba towns yet having a moral and spiritual influence among all. It is significant that this simple truth has been ritualised.

Ogun and the Yoruba towns outside the Oyo empire.

The Oyo empire never embraced the whole of Yorubaland. It held sway over the sub-tribes living in the southern towns and villages. But the north-eastern kingdoms of the Ijesha and the Ekiti never fully came under the rule of Oyo. It is interesting to note that it is in these areas that Ogun is found to be the cult which provides the most festive socio-political ritual celebrations of the year. Among other Yoruba groups, Ogun is found mainly as a professional cult of the guilds of hunters and blacksmiths. Why this is so is not unrelated to the failure of Oyo to subdue these people and the way the people were able to repulse the attacks of Oyo soldiers.

Ogun was said to be one of the children of Oduduwa and lived with his father for a time before he moved into a forest hide-out at Ire or Oke Ori which served him as a workshop for his manufacture of iron implements.(63) The cult which grew up around his name has been associated with hunting, warfare and implements of iron. At least one of the myths related about Ogun is in connection with the origin or the early days of iron-smelting and iron-smithery.

---

(62) This story has caught the imagination of contemporary Yoruba poets and interpreters, as evidenced by J.P. Clark, "The Imprisonment of Obatala", a poem published in Black Orpheus, Ibadan, No. 10, p. 5 and Obotunde Ijimere and Ulli Beier, The Imprisonment of Obatala and other Plays, Heinemann, 1966

(63) Several myths connected with the exploits of Ogun are narrated in Judith Gleason, Op. cit., pp. 44-56.

Yoruba iron-smelting techniques have been dated at somewhere in the period between 500 B.C. and A.D. 200[64] This may be taken to represent the time when the professional cult of hunters also became the cult of iron implements. How soon afterwards the peaceful uses of iron passed into the making of war implements, we do not know. Whatever the case, the Ogun cult must have existed for a long time among the Yoruba side by side with the cults of Obatala, Oduduwa and the latter-day Sango.

Ogun versus Sango. There is a story told about a dispute between Sango and Ogun as to who was senior to the other. Seniority in Yoruba tradition is established mainly by age. This is attested by the use of the words Egbon and Aburo which are generally employed in seniority disputes. The connotation of egbon is always 'older brother or sister or kin', and aburo is the direct opposite, refering to one who is younger in age. But the same terms are used in reference to superiority in strength and power.

The dispute was said to have arisen from the fact that Oya, Ogun's wife, divorced him and married Sango. Oya took the responsibility entirely on herself and absolved Sango from any fault in this matter. It was she who was tired of staying at home by herself during Ogun's frequent and long war expeditions. However, Ogun challenged Sango to a fight. As it happened, Sango defeated Ogun on three different occasions. Their dispute had an adverse effect on the cosmic order. The rain did not fall, crops could not grow and ripen, maidens suffered malnutrition and delayed their weddings. The dispute therefore became of vital interest to the community. The two were summoned to the king. There the dispute about divorce and seduction became a seniority dispute and a contest

---

(64) Dennis Williams has discussed this dating in his paper on "Art in Metal" in S.O. Biobaku (ed), Sources of Yoruba History, O.U.P., 1973. pp. 142f.

of power. The king adjourned the case for seven days after which he ordered each party to return with seven knots on a piece of cloth. When the day arrived and the seven knots of each were untied, the knots of Ogun were found to be empty, but those of Sango contained some cotton wool. A woman, Yemonja, was invited by the king to adjudicate in the matter. Yemonja adjudged Sango to be the more powerful because he had control over the rain. Ogun of course had to be acknowledged because he had power over warfare and bloodshed.(65)

Since Ogun was undoubtedly known at Ile-Ife, there being a smithery with an immense stone mallet within the palace precincts and known in Ile-Ife as "the smithery of Ogun the first blacksmith on earth", the historical seniority of Ogun can be said to be well attested. The story related above is undoubtedly an Oyo charter myth seeking to establish Sango, the new Oyo palace cult, over the Ogun cult which was evidently widely known and practised before the reign of the fourth Alaafin of Oyo after whose demise the Sango cult came into existence.

In Ilesha and Ekitiland where Oyo influence was not felt, the Ogun cult is widely accepted as being the chief cult of the people. The fact that these areas lie more in the forest zone of Yorubaland in contrast to much of the Oyo area which is of the savannah type(66) would encourage the inhabitants to be hunters of game. Coupled with the fact that the Ijesha and Ekiti were valiant in warfare, the Ogun cult would naturally be highly favoured among them. Ogun, after all, is the cult of hunters, of soldiers, of all who deal in metal implements, all who need manly courage.

---

(65) This story is recorded in a Yoruba poem. See A.O. Adebayo, Standard Yoruba Course, Ibadan, 1965, pp. 152-153.

(66) See A.L. Mabogunje and Omer-Cooper, Op. cit., p.1.

The annual celebration of the Ogun festival in different Yoruba towns places the emphasis on different elements of the various Ogun myths and aspects of the social history of the people. For example, the climax at the annual celebration of the Ogun festival in Ilesha today is a simulated warfare in which the town chiefs are involved in the open market-place, watched by hundreds of the populace whose communal fortune or peace is believed to depend on this re-enactment of an ancient war in which Ogun fought on the side of the Ijesha. Thus among the Ijesha, as among other groups, the Ogun festival and its rituals are believed to be of the greatest efficacy for the well-being of the whole community.

In Ire, reputed to be the place of abode of Ogun when he left Ife and therefore the home of his first foundry, the annual Ogun festival celebrates his exploits with his people and his last days among them when, after a mad slaughter of his people, he vowed to them his protection whenever they called upon him.(67) In Ile-Ife, the ritual drama depicts a conflict between the king and the Ogun priests resulting in the king's victory.(68) In Ede, the displacement of Ogun by Sango is most marked. Ogun was the original cult of the Timi, the king of Ede. The legend which relates how the Sango cult was introduced speaks of the birth of a baby boy to a Timi. The boy was born with both fists firmly closed. The Ifa oracle directed that Sango priests be sent for from Oyo. It was they who were able to open the fists and in them were found a cowry and a celt stone, emblems of the Sango cult. The boy became a Sango cult adherent.

---

(67) Richard Taylor, "Ogún Ónire", Nigeria Magazine, No. 114, 1974, p.57.

(68) Op. cit. p. 57.

He later became a Timi and it was during his reign that Sango replaced Ogun as the king's primary cult.(69) The clenched fists in this story are similar to the knots in the parallel story narrated above.

The meanings of the Ogun cult are therefore many and varied. The praise-names of Ogun include a section in which the singer narrates that he had information about no less than seven varieties of the Ogun cult, and certainly seven here is just a round number.(70) The illustrations quoted by the singer happen to have included none of the significant ones we have referred to above. This underlines the fact that in the commemoration of Ogun, each group emphasizes only those aspects which are of social or personal significance to it.

In the face of the evidence presented above, it is no longer valid simply to compile a list of Yoruba gods and goddesses as if they originated in their present form - their genealogical order, their substantive attributes and their hierarchial stratified statuses - by means of an original primeval revelation to the Yoruba ancestors. Instead, we must see the divinities in terms of the social-political struggles within and between the various Yoruba groups, for their present form has been shaped by their history.

There are many Yoruba groups. Each Yoruba tribe or sub-tribe has its own cult considered by local people to be of the greatest social significance for themselves. In each locale, the cult which provides the over-all festival and ceremony of the year is considered to be the most important cult. There are many cultural strands among the Yoruba. Therefore, we should expect to have various religious strands and traditions.

---

(69) Ulli Beier, A Year of Sacred Festivals in One Yoruba Town, Lagos, 1959, pp. 42f.

(70) The poem as found on p. 285 of Daramola and Jeje, Awon Asa ati Orisa Ile Yoruba, Onibonoje Press, Ibadan, 1967, lists the different ritual offering for the Ogun associated with five different kings, one professional group (carvers and sculptors) and one private individual who probably is a warrior. Cf. J.F. Odunjo, Eko Ijinle Yoruba Alawiye, Apa Keji, Longmans of Nigeria, 1969, pp. 90-91.

The Ile-Ife strand is the earliest and has cultural significance. The Oyo strand originated in military conquest and developed political pre-eminence. Other local strands can still be traced in a number of places, notably Osun of Osogbo, Ogun of Ilesha, Adokun and Ejide of Igan-Okoto, Agemo and the local calendar of cultic rituals in Ijebu-Ode as described for us by Chief Okubote in his book published in the late 1930s.(71) In each case, the social and political history of the people has influenced the ascendancy or decay of the cults. Such a social history has to be considered with respect to their influence on the religious system of the people.

We hold therefore that it is more realistic to treat the objects of worship and cults of the Yoruba in the light of the social history of the people rather than to regard the whole as one intellectually logical complex in which the 'gods and goddesses' became the ministers of the Supreme God Olodumare, or evolutionary emanations of divinity belonging to a hierarchical order populated with a high-god, nature divinities, ancestral ghosts and charms and amulets in a descending order. The former is a theological myth; the latter is a history-of-religion myth. The matter bears further discussion.

---

(71) A comparative study of a calendar of annual festivals in different Yoruba towns is an illuminating exercise supporting the view that there are various cults peculiar to particular places, with wide differences in names and types of cults. For the Ijebu, for example, Moses Bótù Òkùbótè (Iwé Kukuru ti Itan Ijèbú, Lisabi Press, Ibadan, n.d., pp. 59-79) has a list and description of each, though the order is different from that given by another eminent Ijebu man, Chief J.A. Ajibola in his Owe Yoruba, O.U.P., Ibadan, 1968, p. 8. The latter committed the usual mistake of claiming his list to be general for the 'Yoruba'. The list is then reproduced by Chief J.F. Odunjo, Op. cit., p. 139. J.A. Olusola in his Ancient Ijebu-Ode, Abiodun Press, Ibadan, 1968 provides very useful information on the cults (called 'fetiches') special to each 'quarter' or ward in Ijebu-Ode town (See pp. 9-29). What a variety, and such a silent condemnation of the stereotype listing with which we are familiar in the standard textbooks on the religion of the Yoruba.

4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IFÁ IN YORUBA RELIGION

(a) Definition of Ifá.

We have seen above how Orunmila is regarded both as companion of Òdùduwà on their first arrival on earth and as the alter ego of "the man of Ife", the first man and ancestor of all. Eponymous stories surround the name of Òdùduwà. A complicated system of myths and rituals usually used for divination and other practical purposes is associated with Orunmila. This cultic system is what is known as Ifá.

Yoruba men of religion always insist that Ifá is not an orisa but a religious system. Orunmila who is closely connected with Ifá is like any other Orisa. But Ifá itself is only the name of the magico-religious system which provides the means for coping with life for an individual, his lineage, his cultic or professional group.

The basic content of Ifá is the Odu or corpus of myths.

There are 16 primary Odu (myth-sequences) in the Ifá system. By a series of combination and permutation, 240 Secondary Odu are formed, thus making a total of 256. Each Odu or myth-sequence has a multiple of stories called 'houses' or 'traditions'. No one is able to say how many 'houses' there are in each Odu. Sixteen have been suggested, but this may be an easy 'round figure' tallying with the original sixteen. It means that there are some 4,096 stories in the Ifá system which each priest is expected to preserve by oral transmission and utilise in the daily function of divination! It has been found that in actual practice a priest does not know more than say four stories to each Odu. And it is possible that some stories are only variants of others.(72)

---

(72) M. & F. Herskovits, Op. cit. p. 18

The specialist who handles the Ifá myths is called a bābálawo, the man of knowledge, the father of mysteries. To obtain wisdom about a situation from Ifá, the bābálawo holds sixteen palm-nuts in his left hand. He attempts to collect them with his right hand, taking note of how many remain in the left hand. Should he have one left, he makes two signs on the powdered tray. When he has two left, he makes one sign. The operation goes on eight times. By this time he can read what Ōdù 'house' is indicated. Through a recital and exegesis of the Ōdù, the bābálawo has the necessary information and guidance appropriate to the life situation under investigation. It is these Ōdù myths and the whole Ifá system which we propose need to be examined to discover the source, the boundary-lines, the direction and the existential relevance of Yoruba religious behaviour into which context Christianity came.

(b) Which is the most important Òrìsà cult?

The significance of Ifá in the Yoruba religious scene can be appreciated if we raise the question as to which is the central cult of all the Òrìsà cults in the Yoruba religious system. Ólódumarè is not part of the consideration here for he is not one of the òrìsà divinities. He occupies a class by himself. But of the òrìsà cults, which is the most highly regarded or centrally determinative of what happens to the rest? This is an intriguing question.

Passing reference was made to it by Parrinder[73] in reference to the claims made by the Ìjọ̀ Òrúnmìlà on behalf of the personage after whom their Ìjọ̀ was named. The whole question deserves a thorough examination. Over against Parrinder's comment about the claims of the Ìjọ̀ Òrúnmìlà, that "this cult is only one of the old pagan cults, and cannot speak as the whole of Yoruba religion", we set his own

---

(73) op. cit. 1961 p. 193

earlier statement which is worth quoting in full here:

> "There is a great body of stories connected with Ifá in which nearly all the gods recur, and which is a fund of information on Yoruba religion that is still only partially recorded. This shows the importance of Ifa as intermediary between men and the gods, and therefore he is connected with all of them".(74)

The comparison of Orunmila to Jesus either as the founder of a universal religion or as a prophet sent to a specific people is another question. This will be carefully and critically examined later on. The central position of the Ifá cult in Yoruba religion is what we contend has to be examined on its own merits.

There is a practical significance in this question for the Christian Church as it seeks to make itself indigenous among the Yoruba. Any religion which is finally going to replace the traditional religion will have to meet, in their contemporary forms, the same needs as that religion. So, what is the central feature of Yoruba Traditional Religion in which Christianity has to be rooted? Our answer is that central to the Yoruba Traditional Religion is the IFÁ divinatory system which enshrines all the myths of origin of the world and of the characterization of forces operative in the world. The corollary to this is better added at once; that the significance of Ifá consists chiefly in its functional relevance for solving the dilemmas experienced by individuals in their human existential situation.

(c) The evidence of missionary and other observers.

The prime position of Ifá in the vast number of cults and ritual systems of Yorubaland was easily recognized by the earliest missionaries. In the memoirs of Anna Hinderer, wife of the first CMS

---

(74) op. cit. p. 138.

missionary in Ibadan, it is noted that: "The gradual suppression of the slave-trade opened the way, in 1843, for the preaching of the Gospel to the inhabitants of this country, whose religion is a system of idolatry, in which a multitude of orisa or idols, above all, Ifa, the god of divination, who is represented and consulted by means of palm-nuts, are worshipped as mediators between the people and the one Supreme God whom they acknowledge. Their religion is laden with foolish and cruel superstitions, even human sacrifices being offered to some of the gods on special occasions."(75)

There are other references to Ifa in her memoirs. On noticing the name of one woman enquirer as Ifawe, Anna Hinderer recorded. "You will remember Ifa is the Chief god of the Yorubas. Many names are given in honour of him. Ifawe means 'Ifa washes'. This led us to speak to her of the only efficacious washing of our guilty souls in the precious blood of Jesus".(76) One interesting entry noted that the missionary couple at one time ran short of supplies and attempted to borrow money from the chiefs. "Ifa must be consulted before D.V. could be lent cowries", but "Ifa forbade them to lend the white man cowries".(77) She later commented: "Some poor heathen look on and say, What is the use of their serving God? they die, and they get trouble; and Ifa and Sango etc. often help us".(78)

Talbot sometimes seems to give prominence to Sango. "He is natural; the cult of the lightning god is most prevalent in the interior regions, where the rainfall is not so heavy and its absence, or presence, assumes greater importance".(79) Apparently, Talbot failed to note the historico-political aspect of Sango to which attention has been called above. But later on, he wrote, "In some

---

(75) Anna Hinderer, Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country, London, 1872, pp. 18-20.

(76) Ibid pp. 221-223.

(77) Ibid p. 234

(78) Ibid p. 235

(79) P.A. Talbot, The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Oxford, 1926, p. 16

cases the original name of the divinity was superseded by one which was really borne by some here, to whom many of the attributes of the god were transferred, when details of the former cult had been forgotten. Examples of this may probably be found in Sàngo the Yoruba god of lightning and Òdùduwà the earth goddess. In others a man noted for his great wisdom and heroism has been deified or semi-deified after his death - such as Ifá, the Yoruba god of divination".(80) Later on, he noted that "with the Ọ̀wọ̀ Ekiti Sàngo is known as Ọ̀nyìlà, but is not as popular as Ifá".(81)

He noted later still: "Among most of the Yoruba sub-tribes, especially the Ìjèbu and the Ekiti the favourite doity is Ifá, the god of divination and wisdom, who is worshipped by all the men and is deemed by many to be the one appointed by the Supreme God to protect and rule their tribe".(82) Talbot has a table of "The Principal Deities and their symbols" for the different Southern Nigerian tribes treated in his book.(83) On page 60, he has Ọlọ́run for Oyo; but for Ijebu, he put down "Ifá, not Awlawoun" as the Supreme God!

Talbot observes that Ifá priests "rank as the highest of all Yoruba priests and are followed in order of seniority by those who practice medicine, the Àosányin, etc.; the priests of Ọbàtálá and Ọ̀dùduà... then those of Shàngo... and last of all those of Òrìshà Ọ̀kọ̀."(84) "It was Ifá, often called Àwrúmìlà, who instituted the Yoruba lunar month, and the first day of their week is named after him, 'Ọjọ́ Àwọ̀', the day of the sacred".(85) "Ifá cannot be consulted unless the counsel of an inferior oracle called Àwpele, who is regarded as his

---

(80) Ibid. p. 18.
(81) Ibid. p. 23.
(82) Ibid. p. 33.
(83) Ibid. pp. 55-60
(84) Ibid. p. 33.
(85) Ibid. p. 33.

attendant, is first taken... Awpele is however consulted only on minor matters and by anyone who has learnt the procedure from Babalawo. The priests themselves have recourse to it daily, while they only perform the Ifá divination every fifth day".(86)

Writing of the Ketu arm of the Yoruba people, Crowther observed, "The chief superstition of the people is the worship of the devil, Ifa, and other country fashions common in this country. The Egungun of Yoruba, and the Oro and Ogboni of the Egbas, are not allowed in the town in Ketu; they are looked upon as inventions which spoil the country."(87) "Of the religious cults, the Ifa diviners who could influence the choice of a new king and whose predictions were sought on all major problems were obviously important".(88)

Thus, the central position of Ifá in the Yoruba religious system has impressed missionary observers and ethnographical writers for very long. Furthermore, there has been a renewed interest in its study from the end of the nineteenth century, with the result that the Ifá system has become the most carefully studied and documented so far of all the different elements in Yoruba religion. Nevertheless, no comparative study of religion has hitherto faced the real implications of this observation. Nor has the influential position of Ifá been realised in the contemporary readjustment of the Christian Church among the Yoruba.

By Lijadu's use of stanzas from the Ifá corpus, he shows his conviction about the centrality of Ifá in the Yoruba religious system, and the significance of Ifá myths as containing the richest deposit of theological ideas in Yoruba traditional religion.

One Àtúndáolu of the Wesleyan Methodist Church was noted in the Synod minutes of 1900 in MMS Archives in London as having been

---

(86) Ibid p. 136

(87) Quoted by E.G. Parrinder, The Story of Ketu, University of Ibadan Press, 1962, p. 93.

(88) A.L. Mabogunje and J. Omer-Cooper, Op. cit. p.10

interested in a study of the Ifá oracles. He paid a visit to Ilé-Ifè in the previous year "to learn the language of Òdùdúwà".(89) Thus a great interest in Ifá has been shown all along.

What to do with Ifá has been a problem in the indigenization process of Christianity among the Yoruba as the history of the Ethiopian Church and the later Àdúlàwò amply illustrates.(90) Many have been scared away from what they considered to be the paganism and idolatry in Ifá. Others, with a bravado inspired by nationalistic zeal amounting to jingoism, have plunged headlong into a full-scale adoption of Ifá as the most comprehensive Yoruba religious system. Our limited objective in this thesis is to trace briefly the history of what has happened so far, and, in a theological way, to indicate what seem to be the underlying spiritual struggles which have been going on in the mind of many Yoruba Christians.

(d) Ifá embraces all Òrìsà cults.

Another question which needs to be asked is whether any effort has ever been made by the Yoruba people themselves to reduce their traditional religion to a unified and integrated system. The answer is yes. The only comprehensive system which we know of is Ifa.

Ifá is a religious system which seeks to integrate the whole of the Yoruba religious system, mythical, historical, imperialistic-local-historical, personal-lineage custom (which includes the customary way in which each lineage performs their rites of passage), etc. Ifá is in a class by itself. It is not an òrìsà. It did not come down from heaven (or the sky) like Òbàtálá; neither did it spring from Yemaja's breast like Ogún or Òbàlúaye.(91)

---

(89) This phrase was brought to my notice by Dr. J.D.Y. Peel in a conversation on 2nd May, 1974.

(90) See chapter III below.

(91) J. Gleason, op. cit. pp. 6-10

A process of centralizing Ifá has been going on all the time. For long, Ifá has occupied a unique place. For example, in the idea of a 4-day week and the variant idea of a seven-day week, it has traditionally been disputed whether Ifa had a separate day or not. As the saying goes Ọjọ́ gbọ́gbọ̀ l'ọ̀jọ́ Àwọ̀. B'ọ́ni tì rí ọ̀la kì í rí bẹ́ẹ̀ l'ó nmú Bàbálàwo dí'fá ọ̀jọ́gúmọ́. "Every day is an Ifá day. It is because no tomorrow is ever like today that a Bàbálàwo consults the Ifá oracle each succeding day".

Ifá is a Yoruba religious complex which has sought to embrace and co-ordinate all the different cults of Yorubaland into a meaningful whole, providing both for each individual and each community a religious pattern with its own relevant existential character. Compared to this, the theological and phenomenological pattern created by the intellectualist approach which has for long dominated the scene is existentially irrelevant. When things go wrong, Ifá confidently declares where and why and which of the cults would help towards a solution.

Ifá can be taken as a repository of information on all forms of Yoruba religions and cults.(92) It is the depository of the myths of the different divinities and the cults associated with them. It has the stories of origin of all the cults in the Yoruba system. Ifá contains the information about the genealogies of the orisa and their relationships one to another. Ifá is generally consulted as to the appropriate date for celebrating the annual festivals of the different cults. As such, it can rightly be said that the other cults are subsumed within it.

The question probably resolves itself at this late date to one of investigating also which is the most resilient of all the Yoruba Orisa.

---

(92) E.G. Parrinder, 1961, p. 138.

Today, most of the Yoruba religious cults are disintegrating and disappearing from the scene. Some of them are confined now to particular Yoruba towns and villages. For example, Òsùn is worshipped today only in Òsógbo and its environs. It is a riverain god (some say goddess). Even though the Òsun river flows and passes through other villages, yet Òsun worship is either completely non-existent or is not as enthusiastically and elaborately observed in those villages as in Òsógbo. It is so deep-seated in Òsógbo itself because there are Òsógbo myths in which the Òsun is closely bound to the cultural history of the people. Similarly in Ede, where Sàngó worship seems to take precedence because of a close historical link between Ede and Òyó, the Òsun festifal is now bound up with Sàngó.(93) In the same way, Ògun is confined now largely to Ilesha and Ekiti areas. The force of change has meant the disappearance of some cults. In the case of Ifá, change has meant an increase of its importance.

With the attenuation of so many of the Yoruba religious cults as distinct systems, it becomes clearer how Ifá has all along incorporated them into itself while at the same time giving them their distinctive standing so that they have had their own priesthood, rituals and life-situation specializations. The existence of a priesthood kept the distinctiveness alive. As soon as the priesthood disappears, however, the continuing existence is kept in being by the Ifá system. The Ifá babálawo now serves as proxy for the Òsun priest, the Yemonja priest, the Ògun priest, and others whereever these latter priests no longer exist.

Ifá is the last surviving, most dynamic, most alive, most wide-spread of all Yoruba religious cults. This is due to the fact that it has a professional priesthood, a body of knowledge and beliefs which are systematically transmitted to the novice or initiate, and

---

(93) cf. Tìmì of Ede's letter to the Nigerian Christian, Ibadan December 1970.

unlike most of the other cults is evidently related to the whole of life.

In the light of the discussion above on the unity of the Religion of the Yoruba, we consider it important to make a note of the integrative centrality of the Ifá cult in Yoruba Religion. It is in the Ifá system that Yoruba religions become Yoruba Religion, a coherent system of the beliefs and practices of one people speaking one language and living in a wide geographical area which now forms part of Nigeria.

The theological system of the Yoruba people is found mainly in the Odu-Ifa. This has to be maintained as a basic working idea. This is the ground on which Fela Sowande criticised Idowu, that he simply quoted the Odu without acknowledging that the quotations were from the Ifá system.(94) Professor Idowu used Odu-Ifa extensively but did not emphasise that it was within the Ifa system that his "Diffused Monotheism" begins to become meaningful.

However, the common people today do not consciously live by a detailed knowledge of the Ifá corpus. Knowledge of the Ifa corpus is more restricted than ever before. Many converts from traditional religion now live by new systems which they have learnt in their newly adopted religions, either Christianity or Islam (or Rosicrucianism, etc.). The Babalawo of today do not seem to take a keen interest in Odu stanzas and stories which can be considered as being of theological sifnificance. Judging from the popular Ifa books that are being put on the market to guide diviners and interpreters of dreams, there is definitely a greater interest in stanzas of practical geomantic and cultic values. It is these which provide easy predictions for individual personal problems, with ritual prescriptions and incantations to relieve anxieties and if possible ensure future happiness. Stories of philosophical, cosmic and

---

(94) Fela Sowande, Ifá, Foreward Press, Yaba East, n.d. pp. 25f, Sowande elaborated upon this view in a personal conversation.

universal interest are considered not practical enough, or are even considered by most Bābálawō to be more dangerous to memorize because of the inherent potency of such stories.

We have indicated above that some scholars have analysed African Traditional Religion into four distinct elements, viz.

i. belief in a Supreme God,

ii. ancestor-cults,

iii. cults related to nature-spirits,

iv. the use of magic, charms and amulets.

It can be shown that the last three of these elements are closely related to the maintenance, preservation and strengthening of life and are therefore matters of life and death. It is at these points that questions of the nature of the African world-view can properly be raised. What Fr. Tempels has described as a recognition of vital force or the people's awareness of dunamis is felt in these realms. The cult where all these are summed up in Yoruba religion is Ifá. Here is where we discover the springs of African Theology. Beliefs and practices arising from these areas and therefore from the Ifa cult as a whole pervade the life of the Yoruba man so much that when a Christian, for example, backslides from Christian faith and practice into Yoruba "paganism", what he reverts to is not the worship of Ọlódumarè, but rather to some aspect of the Ifá system. It is evident, as Parrinder has noted and as we have discussed above, that Ọlódumarè is rarely worshipped - far less than the spirits and forces related to the remaining three-quarters of Yoruba religious life. One might say then that to understand Yoruba Traditional Religion in its dynamic effect on daily existence, we should not begin with a study of the High-God concept (Ọlódumarè), but rather with the psychical forces which are believed to be influential in determining the course of life, personal and social.

Our contention is that the medium of unifying the multiplicity of experiences in Yoruba traditional religion is not through the "diffused monotheism" which Idowu has proposed as centered in Olódumare. Rather, it is through the practical and empirical life-affirming cult of Órúnmila in the Ifá system. It is there that all the divinities and spirits find their explanation and control.(95)

(e) Ifá is for all occassions

Not only has Ifá absorbed the other cults into itself, Ifá is the central idea round which the others revolve. Where other cults exist each one for its own specific occasion or life-style, Ifá is for all occasions, all exigencies, all situations of life, for yesterday, today and tomorrow. Ifá as a religious system concerns itself with the whole of life and man's adjustment of himself to, or search for ways of controlling, the powers that seem to range themselves against man. On the basis of a divinatory (i.e. functional) religion, all aspects of life are embraced - personal, social, political. It deals with the whole of life and all situations of man's existence. The religious taboos of the different cults and the rules of law governing the organization and administration of Yoruba society are enshrined and preserved in the Ifa system.

Ifá has the stories of origin of individual human personalities. That is why Ifá is consulted at the birth of every infant, and at other times of passage from one significant stage of life to another. In the appointment of kings and chiefs in the Yoruba political set-up, Ifá not only gives guidance on the right candidate. The chief himself consults Ifa every morning for guidance in political administration.

---

(95) Robin Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science" Africa XXXVII/1 1967, p. 52. "Indeed, one of the lessons of such recent studies of African cosmologies as Middleton's...., Lienhardt's... Forte's... and my own articles on the Kalabari, is precisely that the god of a given culture do form a scheme which interprets the vast diversity of everyday experience in terms of action of a relatively few kinds of forces". Our contention is that for the Yoruba, it is in Ifá system that such a scheme becomes evident and is made readily available to those who need the knowledge or treatment.

Thus, Ifá is the central point where religion touches and directs political organization, political decisions and political administration. If the Yoruba political system ever shows any theocratic tendencies at all, it is in its basis of origin and of operation in Ifa.

It is significant that part of the function of Ifá is to establish and assert the individuality of each person and community and give guidance as to how to maintain the integrity of that individuality in relation to all environmental, cosmic and psychic forces at work in and around the individual person and community. So, the methodology of "total anthropology" to which we have called attention above is latent in the Ifá system itself and is essential for its proper operation towards all accurate prognostication and effective prescription.

5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MYTHS IN IFÁ

(a) Two traditions of Yoruba myths

A sure approach to the study of Yoruba Religion is through the MYTHS. Of the various traditions, two are especially notable. First is the primary Odudúwà corpus under several adaptations which gives Yemọ̀njà as the mother of all the various Òrìsà and which tells the history of each Òrìsà accordingly. The second main tradition of Yoruba myths are the Órúnmìlà myths of the Ifá corpus so far as they are contained in the sixteen primary Odù and their combinations. The first are primarily myths of origin and saga myths; the others are paradigmatic myths of general human experience. They are both transmitted orally, but the Ifá is more sacred.

The myth plays a determinative role in the Ifá religious system. Whatever else may be said of the relation between religion and myths in other religious systems, it is an incontrovertible fact that in the Ifá system the relation is more then incidental. The myth is indissolubly involved with the system. Without the Odù corpus,

there would be no Ifa system. Though the primary use of the myths is for divination, yet it is not correct to speak of Ifa as if it were simply a divinatory system. It is more than that. It is a whole religious entity. The place of the myth in Ifa is the place occupied in a scriptural religion by the 'scriptures', though in this case the 'scripture' has been transmitted through oral channels only. It is a collection of oracular myths, originally and continously 'spoken' from beyond us to reach individual persons or individual situations of need. It was even believed by many Ifa specialists that the transmission of the same memoriter is directly from Orunmila himself, the personage who either fashioned the system originally or to whom it was first 'given'. It may not be too much to say that the myth is the system, so long as it is understood that the myth finds also non-verbal forms of expression which together make the Ifa religious system.

The emphasis in the Ifa system itself has always been on knowledge. So there is a decided advantage in approaching a study of Yoruba traditional religion through the system which lays emphasis on knowledge and information. In so far as myths can be taken as the institutionalized literary sources for the credal assumptions, propositions and assertions of a people's way of life, Ifa myths enshrine in sum the totality of the religious beliefs of the Yoruba people. The Odudua and Orunmila traditions of myths have to be further examined to establish the priority between them. Their significance has to be defined in the light of the study of myths in general.

(b) The Study of myths

In the opening chapter of his small but influential volume Myth in Primitive Psychology, B. Malinowski defines his aim in these words: "I propose to show how deeply the sacred tradition, the myth, enters into their pursuits, and how strongly it controls their moral and social behaviour. In other words, the thesis of the present

work is that an intimate connection exists between the word, the mythos, the sacred tales of a tribe on the one hand, and their ritual acts, their social organisation, and their practical activities on the other".(96) This opinion has been confirmed in practically every case where the mythical material of any people has been studied carefully.

What Malinowski denied in his day - namely, that myths contained implicitly and sometimes explicitly the attempt to explain or make intelligible some ideas conceived by a people concerning the world in which they live - is however being asserted today. Not many anthropologists can say with him today "As to any explanatory function of the myths there is no problem which they cover, no curiosity which they satisfy, no theory which they contain".(97) The very fact that there are a good number of myths explaining "Why?" is sufficient refutation of Malinowski's view on this matter.

However, Malinowski encourages us to see what he calls the "pragmatic" character of mythology among the people for whom it serves as the cumulative expression of thought, reflection, and belief. Myths have to be seen in the total context of a people's culture. Herein lies the fundamental error of those who find the origin of myths in ritual, magic or agricultural practice alone. No single factor or isolated areas of life can exclusively account for the origin of myths or explain the total significance of mythical traditions. Their roots go deep. Their influence is extensively spread. Both roots and influence lie in the cultural whole of the life of the people.

---

(96) B. Malinowski, Myth in Primitive Psychology, New York, 1926, p.11.

(97) Ibid p. 79.

The publication of The New Golden Bough[98], being a resorting of materials from the original monumental work[99] of James G. Frazer for a new abridged one-volume edition, points to two things: a coming-of-age of the study of Mythology, and an attempt to re-establish the influence of James Frazer among his professional successors. Frazer's conjectures and hypotheses are speculative. They are so speculative that the discovery of innate principles and meanings of myths from different cultures has long outgrown his ideas. Yet it is Frazer's collection that made him great, not his theories. The universal range of his specimens makes it necessary for anthropologists frequently to turn to him for their illustrations if not for their theories. His work is mainly descriptive, not analytical. Yet an increasing number of analytical studies today draw heavily on his material, or at least it provides the paradigms which are now being more competently and exhaustively developed.

The extent to which comparative studies on different themes today depend on the inspiration and guidance of Frazer will be clear to those who care to examine in relation to The Golden Bough, the works of say G. Parrinder: West African Psychology[100] Olof Petterson: Chiefs and Gods - Religious and Social Elements in the South Eastern Kingship[101] or Hans Abrahamsson: The Origin of Death - Studies in African Mythology.[102]

---

(98) J. Frazer and T.H. Gastes, The New Golden Bough, Criterion Books, New York, 1959.

(99) The original work, The Golden Bough, was published in series from 1911 to 1914 in London.

(100) G. Parrinder, West African Psychology, London, 1951.

(101) Olof Patterson, Chiefs and Gods: Religious and Social Elements in the South Eastern Bantu Kingship, Studia Theologica Ludensia, Lund, 1953.

(102) Hans Abrahamson, The Origin of Death: Studies in African Mythology, Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensia, Upsala, 1951.

The same can be said of the use of the paradigms of Oedipus from Greek Mythology and Job from Biblical mythology in Meyer Fortes' Oedipus and Job in West African Religion(103). It is curious that this is a successful exploitation of the very principle which almost ruined the reputation of James Frazer. From the story of Oedipus, the theme of Fate or Destiny is derived. From the story of Job, the theme of Justice or Righteousness is derived. These two are then sought and identified as characteristic in the beliefs of Yoruba, Benin or Dahomey in West Africa. But they are treated more extensively and more adequately in the case of the Tallensi whose patterns of life and cultural traditions have been studied previously by Professor Fortes. Unlike James Frazer, Professor Fortes does not say that these are universal principles or themes in every religion or culture. But he says these are to be found in West African Religion and deserve analytical study to discover whether they have the same significance as in Greek or Persian mythology where the paradigms were first identified.

This is the kind of study which deserves more attention today. A theological or philosophical theme is selected, it is identified paradigmatically in some ancient religion, it is then studied as exhaustively as possible through the religious beliefs, ritual practices and traditional behaviour of a people in contemporary society. The content of the myth then becomes the provenance of the religious and ethical life of the present. The myth is thus shown to be living and powerful, not merely an imaginative reconstruction of the past or a literary device to brighten up the face of boredom.

Nevertheless, there is a danger inherent in this approach. It is easy, as it has been proved in the work of Frazer, to squeeze the religious beliefs of a contemporary 'primitive' society into the straight-jacket of an ancient mythology, just as it is easy to fall

---

(103) Meyer Fortes, Oedipus and Job in West African Religion, Cambridge, 1959.

into the error of "translating African ideas into European categories"(104) and thus to deny the African system its own integrity.

At this point, a fundamental error of approach in the collection of Yoruba myths becomes apparent. Ifa myths are not just a jumbled amalgam of isolated stories. It is not sufficient to quote the Odu in support of individual theories of one thing or another. It can be hoped that Ifa studies will become more systematic as time goes on, that the relationships of the stories within one group of Odu and between one group of Odu and another will be clearer. Also, the myths themselves must be seen in the totality of Yoruba life and thought,(105) so that the existential questions which lie behind the Odu can be better identified and interpreted. Then a necessary distinction can be made more clearly between divinatory myths (Ifa Iwose, or Iwadi), ritual myths (Ifa Ebo), medicinal myths (Ifa Isegun), incantational myths (Ifa Awure) and philosophic myths (Ifa Ologbon or Ifa Asese) and the Odu grouped accordingly. Then the philosophy of life offered by the Ifa system as a whole can be better expounded. It is then that a theological analysis and interpretation of the Ifa system by itself and the Odu within it can be more viable. A more positive attitude towards Ifa is therefore now called for with the study of the Odu being undertaken in the light of the new insights coming from the contemporary study of the definition and structure of myths.

(c) Definition of Myth. Definitions of myths, like definitions of religion, can be grouped in various ways, three of which are relevant for our purpose here. The three classes are valuative, substantive

---

(104) G. Parrinder, 1951. p.1.

(105). It is lack of this in W. Bascom's monumental Ifa Divination: Communication Between Gods and Men in West Africa, Indiana University Press, 1969 which justifies its having been described as "show-case anthropology".

or functional.[106] Valuative or narrative myths can be said to be either sacred tales or fallacious history. Substantive myths are those which either tell of gods or deal with the beliefs and creeds of a religious group. Myths which can be described as functional are those dealing directly with the human condition. They can be speculative and explanatory, provide historical charters for social organizations, or serve as the background, justification and potency for rituals or other religious ceremonies.

The definition of myth as "fallacious history", which has been under discussion for many years and the ghost of which now deserves to be laid to rest, is a valuative definition. So is the one which sees myth as 'sacred tale'. Similarly, Schniewind's "the expression of unobservable realities in terms of observable phenomena" is so vague and covers so many aspects of religious life that it cannot be accepted as a useful definition of a myth. What it says of a myth has generally been said of sacraments, gestures or symbols so that it does not shed any light on the distinctive characteristics of the nature or function of myths.

A primarily literary interest in the Ọdu-Ifá myths is evinced in the research and writings of Wande Abimbola and the group working in the University of Lagos under the leadership of Ádéboyè Bàbálọlá. The output of the Lagos group is already being published in the "Yoruba Classics" series.[107] The folklore and drama approach to the study of Ọdu-Ifá myths can be seen in some of the writings of Wọlé Soyínká and his successor in the Department of Theatre Arts at

---

(106) J. Milton Yinger, Op. cit. p. 6.

(107) Wándé Abímbólá, Ijinlè Ohun Enu Ifá, Àpá Kìní, Àpá Kéji, Yoruba Classics II & IV. Wm. Collins & Co. Ltd., Glasgow, 1968, 1969.

the University of Ibadan, Dr. J. A. Ádédèji.[108]

These groups of writers, however, will readily agree that while they concentrate on literary or folklore elements in the standard myths of the Yoruba, the significance of such myths far outstrips such approaches, which can at best be considered as preliminary. Myths are necessarily couched in narrative form, but no myths are exclusively narrative. Ọ̀dù-Ifá myths certainly have literary qualities which deserve to be studied with the most up-to-date apparatus of literary criticism. But such a study must be considered subservient to an understanding of their deeper significance. The application of the structural analytical methods of Levi-Strauss to the study of Ọ̀dù-Ifá myths by folklorists and students of literature should contribute greatly to our knowledge of the deeper contents and purpose of the myths in the Ifá corpus.

There is not very much literary difference between Yoruba folktales in general and the myths which are found in the Ọ̀dù-Ifá. There are even many cases where the same story or its variants are found both among the Ọ̀dù and among the folktales. What is qualitatively different is the use to which the stories are put. While folktales are frequently used for entertainment, the stories in the Ọ̀dù-Ifá are used for existential purposes on occasions when a formal and cosmic solution to human problems is considered to be more appropriate for the alleviation of human suffering than an informal and light-hearted one.

---

(108) Wọ́lé Ṣóyínká, "The Fourth stage (Through the Mysteries of Ọ̀ṣun to the Origin of Yoruba Tragedy)", published as ch. 10 in D.W. Jefferson (ed) The Morality of Art (Essays presented to Prof. G. Wilson Knight), London 1964. Joel Adedeji, "Folklore and Yoruba Drama: Ọbatalá as a Case Study", in Richard M. Dorson, African Folklore, Indiana University Press, 1972, pp. 321-340.

The Yoruba in fact distinguish five different classes of narrative. Àlọ́ and Itan are forms used primarily for entertainment. The former have the character of conundrums. The latter are more straight forward stories. Both are reserved for the leisure hours of the night. Told in the daytime, they might be a temptation to avoid the urgent demands of work and of service for the common good. Ijálá, Ẹ̀wì and Ẹ̀fẹ́, on the other hand, are distinguished from the first two by their literary form. They are poetic and musical and vary according to their characteristic tonal styles. But their distinctiveness lies primarily in the festive and religious occasions with which they are associated. Ijala is associated with the rites and ceremonies of the cult of hunters. Ẹ̀wì with the cult of the masqurade, and Ẹ̀fẹ́ with the Gelede cult. They are poetic narratives spoken on religious occasions, partly to provide a humorous approach to religious experience and partly to impart some moral or philosophical lessons from the beyond.

To most scholars of Yoruba religion, Odu-Ifa myths are statements of certain kinds of religious beliefs and practices, especially beliefs in a Creator-God, in various intermediaries between the Creator-God and man, and in various human intermediaries believed to be capable of moving forward and backward from the sphere of ordinary mortals to that of the Creator-God and the divinities.(109) This type of definition we designate roughly as substantive. Whenever religion is taken to be, in Tylor's words, "belief in spiritual beings", myths are inevitably regarded as depositories of facts and data concerning the nature and activities of such spiritual beings especially in their relation to man. According to Malinowski, "Myth fulfils ... an indispensable function; it expresses, enhances and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical

---

(109) Idowu, 1962 pp. 54f; 1973, pp. 159f.

rules for the guidance of man."(110)

It is evident that neither the Yoruba man in the street nor the Yoruba specialist in religion uses the Odu-Ifa myths as sources of theology or of beliefs. Attention will be given in the rest of this thesis to what Yoruba myths are used for. As such, our approach will be functional and the underlying definition of myths will be similarly functional.

Akinwowo has proposed that the Odu-Ifa myths afford sociologists in Nigeria an invaluable source material for making their sociology distinctively Nigerian or African.(111) His proposal relates not simply to the study of religion as such but to the totality of Yoruba culture, of which Yoruba religion as belief in God and in the divinities forms only a fractional part. Nevertheless, it is true that the true meaning of a myth can be ascertained only within the cultural situation of a given myth or the use to which it is put in the religious system within which it is found.

Whatever scholars like Fontenrose may have said against the position of those who - from Robertson Smith and Frazer to others like Conforth and Hooke - have argued in support of the theory that there is a close relation between myths and rituals, there is no doubt that Odu-Ifa myths are so closely related. There may be Greek myths which did not grow in a religious environment, as there are certain Yoruba myths which are told for cultural reasons other than those which are narrowly considered as religious. Nevertheless, Odu-Ifa myths fall in a class apart. They flourish primarily in a religious context, are regarded as specifically sacred, and are used only with a feeling of religious awe. The myths of the Ifa corpus certainly deserve to

---

(110) Quoted in Annemarie de Waal Malefijt, Religion and Culture: An introduction to Anthropology of Religion, Collier-Macmillan, London 1968, p. 179.

(111) A.A. Akinwowo, Nigerian Opinion, Ibadan, Vol. 5, nos. 8-10, Aug.-Oct. 1960, pp. 465-471.

be described in the words of Rudolf Otto as "the vestibule at the threshold of the real religious feelings, an earliest stirring of the numinous consciousness".(112) Ọ̀dù-Ifá myths are to be considered as both the fundamental form of the Ifá religious system and the ultimate source of the system.

Much of the Ọ̀dù-Ifá myths are of the 'operative, iterative and validatory type' identified by G.S. Kirk.(113) The varieties of the aspects of the human situation with which they deal are so complex that no restrictive definitions suffice. Only a combination of different functional definitions will satisfy the situation. Or, to put it in the admirably fitting phraseology of de Waal Malefijt, "What is needed (for the study and analysis of myths) is a holistic and integrative approach that relates the synchronic to the diarchronic, the individual to the cultural, and the psychological to the social function and meaning of myth".(114)

To sum up, then. Ifá Myths have been used by the people to account for the origin, nature, relationships and functions of the divinities, the Òrìsà. But this is not all. The myths give knowledge of the mysterious, knowledge about God, about Creation and the world we live in, about why things are, about sanctions for morality. Thus, the purpose of these myths is "to define our situation in the universe, the structure of existence in the world, and to integrate man in the universe showing... that this condition of existence is part of the very form of this universe. (and that) to participate in it is to be".(115)

---

(112) Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy English translation, OUP, London, p. 122.

(113) G.S. Kirk, Myth, Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 254 f.

(114) de Waal Malefijt, op. cit. 186.

(115) J. Goetz, quoted in Henri Maurier, The Other Covenant: A Theology of Paganism, Newman Press, New York, 1968, p. 43.

There are Ifá myths which explain how things began and which, on the basis of this, develop both a world-view by means of which the nature of things can be explained and a world-view which enables a resolution of conflicts and the integration of existence to take place. Both types of explanation are frequently done by means of symbols, and not always in literal terms. The sea for example, represents in Yoruba mythology the source of wealth and riches in contrast to the land. This is partly based on the reasoning that all rivers and streams and torrents go into the sea. Olokun, the sea divinity, is therefore regarded as very wealthy. In the search for wealth or popularity, therefore, the symbolism of the sea together with objects connected with the sea may have to be used with a related myth.

"Myths and cosmological notions are concerned with the relationship of a people with other peoples with nature and with the supernatural".(116) There are Ifá myths which give information about social history, on the understanding that even social history is sacred history. Not only the story of the gods is sacred history. Thus, Ifá myths are used by the people to explain social origins and lineages. For example, we have referred earlier to Oduduwa and the dispersal of his children which created the Yoruba people, stories which have become historical and charter myths in the community. Such also are myths which explain kingship. The status and role of Yoruba 'first-class Oba' (Kings) have been justified and established on the basis of what the myths say about them. Similarly, the dispute between the Alaafin of Oyo and the Soun of Ogbomoso as to whether the latter is entitled to wear a beaded crown has to be resolved not only on the basis of recent history, as the Soun claimed, but also and particularly on what is recorded in the myths.

---

(116) John Middleton, in his introduction to Myth and Cosmos: Readings in Mythology and Symbolism, The Natural History Press, New York, 1967, p. x.

Ifá myths, therefore, express "some of the ways in which people conceived of their society, the world in which it is set" and the place of man in both.(117) Or, to put it in another way still, an Ifá myth is also "a statement about society and man's place in it and in the surrounding universe".(118)

(d) Myth and Ritual

The inadequacy of most theories in the study of myths, rituals and symbols becomes evident when we seek to apply them in this study. This is largely due to the fact that contemporary methods of studying myths and rituals assume a static situation, a static religion practised by a static people in a perpetual ethnographic present. But we are dealing in this study with a period charged socially, politically, religiously and therefore emotionally with change. It has been a period when the security of people has been threatened by the coming of new ideas, new forms of government and new forms of religious practice. At the same time, the people's optimism, expectancy and eager anticipation of the future has been kindled, nurtured and largely realized. New rituals have been sought for and consciously formulated, old rituals have been re-formulated, and conscious adaptation has taken place.

Rituals in this connection do not need to be thought of only in terms of the narrowly religious. In 1849, a gift of two neatly bound copies of the Bible was sent through the Revd. Henry Townsend by Queen Victoria to Gbádébo the Egba King in Abeokuta.(119) With it also came the gift of a corn-mill from Prince Albert. The presentation was publicly made to the Oba and people. After the presentation, the use of the corn-mill was demonstrated. The astonishment and awe of the people was stirred when they saw fine flour pouring forth.

---

(117) ibid.

(118) ibid.

(119) A.K. Ajisafe, op. cit. pp. 91-94.

It was reported that a few days afterwards Ságbùà, one of the chiefs in charge of public religious ceremonies, wanted to offer a sacrifice both to the Bibles and to the corn-mill. He had to be stopped by Samuel Crowther. There was no doubt which of the two gifts evoked more awe in the people. The demonstration of the corn-mill in itself was undoubtedly a ritual process. It is in the nature of man that individuals or communities who are psychologically going through a period of change or seeing things go wrong would evolve new rituals to deal with the phenomenon of the new future as it showed its visage with a threat or with a promise.

Myths and the re-enactment of them in rituals can be either expressive or instrumental; in order words, they are either expressions of a meaning placed on things or a catalytic action intended to influence the trend of emotional or historical events. Behind the instrumental dimension of myths and rituals is the conception of power subsisting in all things. This concept of dynamism, seen by Placide Tempels as being of an outstanding significance in the philosophy of the Bantu and probably of other African peoples,(120) is certainly evident in the Yoruba world-view. In the Yoruba context, however, it is interpreted not primarily in ontological terms. Objects have power; myths have power; rituals have power; so also have words, ideas, intention, formality, orderliness, and relational patters of actions in their emotionality, goodness or badness.

R.K. Merton has shown that in so far as myths, rituals or any symbols generally are expressive or instrumental, the meaning they express and the function they perform may be either manifest or latent.(121) The manifest meaning and function are frequently of less significance than the latent. The latent meaning of Ifá myths and symbols can be

---

(120) Placide Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, English translation, Presence Africaine, Paris, 1952.

(121) This is discussed in John Beattie, Other Cultures, Routledge Paperback, 1964, pp. 54, 181.

explained in epistemological terms, following the insights of Robin Horton,(122) But this may not be the primary undertaking. The symbols and rituals in Ifá myths can also be taken as psycho-analytical indexes to sound the depths of the psyche in the Yoruba context.(123) This also has to wait. Similarly, sociological interpretations in terms of structure, conflict or protest(124) are possible, as has been hinted at when dealing with the history of Yoruba religion and as will be further mentioned in subsequent chapters. The starting-point in the study and interpretation of Ifá myths has to be looked for in some other approaches.

---

(122) Robin Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science", Africa, XXXVII/1-2, 1967.

(123) Many American anthropologist have come to terms with psychology, Anne Parsons, Belief, Magic and Anomie: Essays in Psycho-social Anthropology, New York, Free Press, 1969 may be quoted as a high-water mark.

On the British scene, the position is changing slowly. Meyer Fortes, as far back as 1957, gave a thoughtful account of Malinowski's debt to psycho-analysis. See "Malinowski and the study of Kinship" in Raymond Firth (ed.), Man and Culture, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957, pp. 157-88; reprinted as "Malinowski and Freud" in Psycho-analysis and the Psycho-analytic Review, 1958, 45, pp. 127-145. Many individual British anthropologists have since independently made use of varying amounts of concepts from psychology and psychiatry. Examples are Margaret Field, Search For Security: An Ethno-psychiatric Study of Rural Ghana, Faber and Faber, London, 1960; Elizabeth Bott, "Psycho-analysis and Ceremony", (1968), in J.S. LaFontaine (ed.), The Interpretation of Ritual, Tavistock, London, 1971, pp. 205-237; Victor Turner, The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of .Ndembu. Ritual, Ithaca, 1967; The Drums of Affliction, O.U.P.

Psycho-analytical interpretations are examined in relation to others in Raymond Firth's comprehensive Symbols: Public and Private, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1973. However, a French-speaking anthropologist with field-work among the Dorze of Ethiopia has produced a seminal monograph criticising the prevailing 'semiological' conceptions of symbols, including Freudian views, the 'cryptological' conception typified by Victor Turner, and Levi-Strauss's theories. See Dan Sperber, Rethinking Symbolism, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

(124) cf. the papers by C. Geertz, E. Willems, et al. in Roland Robertson (ed), Sociology of Religion, Penguin, 1969.

6. THE STRUCTURE OF IFA MYTHS AND RITUALS

Levi-Strauss, followed by Edmund Leach and others, has called attention to the importance of the structure of myths.(125) A simpler structuralism is called for in an initial study of Ifa myths. Also, and this is more important, the structure of the complex of Ifa rituals will shed light on the significance of the Ifa system for the history and phenomenology of religion.

(a) The five-part structure of the myth

Ifa myths have a distinct structure of their own among other forms of Yoruba oral literature, prose or poetry. The structure can be presented in five parts. The first part of an Ifa oracular myth is a kind of signature theme for the whole oracle. This signature theme comes in various forms. It could be a recital of a list of the names of some ancient Ifa priests who were previously connected with the episode about to be related in the myth. In some cases the names of Ifa priests so mentioned may be personifications of objects living or dead, animal or mineral, which are regarded as having a symbolic significance in the story to be told. Alternatively, the symbolism may be presented not by reference to the names of priests but as a straightforward incantation piece involving a play on the names of objects in some "homoeopathic magic", which may have instrumental efficacy in the story in hand. The signature theme comes in another way still; namely, in the form of an epigram, proverb or adage which may be a pointer to the practical philosophy of life or moral imperative deducible from the narrative episode.

After the signature theme comes narration of events introduced with the phrase "A dá fún..." or "A día fún... or A d'Ifá fún", meaning that something in the signature theme was divined for or created for or happened to a person or persons to be named. This second part usually contains a detailed narration of the event or

---

(125) See John Middleton (ed,) op. cit. pp. 1-27. Octavio Paz, Claude Levi-Strauss: An Introduction, Jonathan Cape, London, 1971.

events which happened to one or more people in the remote past in illo tempore. Invariably, we are told the circumstantial experience which provides the setting for the story. In some cases, it is a story of some personal anxiety created by unfulfilled desire, the problem of death, the tensions and animosities in social relationship, or the dilemma created by a moral awareness. In cases where the signature theme has been an incantational piece, the "Á díá fún" section is usually an explanatory statement of the objectives of the incantation and the circumstances in which a use of the incantation has proved effective. It needs to be mentioned in passing that the centrality of experience in religion is established and emphasised here. In the Ifá system, religion is considered as based on general experience of the natural world, the issue of personal existence and the problems of social relations, as well as on the religions consciousness created by an awareness of the transcendent. The Christian interpretation of the Incarnation which emphasised that it is in the routine experience of life that God makes Himself known to us is clearly expressed here in the second part of the Ifá myth.

The third part of an Ifá myth consists of the oracle, divine message, divine pronouncement or promise in response to the experience related in the previous section. This oracular declaration may consist of a fortelling of the future or a timeless declaration of the assured well-being of the person in the episode. In other cases, of course, it may be a warning to the person or people concerned to desist from a contemplated or actual way of life in order to assure a blessing which stands in danger of being threatened or thwarted by the way of life. In any case, such an oracle is generally expressed in such a way that the experience concerned takes on an archetypal nature capable of making it usable as a paradign.

The fourth part is generally the prescription of a ritual ceremony with a note added stating whether the person so enjoined performed the rite or not and with the resultant effect.

Whatever the oracle has declared or predicted, of good or bad, of promise or of warning, a ritual or 'sacrifice' ceremony is always enjoined. This points to the fact that 'sacrifice' in this context is not primarily of the offering, placatary, or expiatory kind traditionally found in 'to the god' theories. Nor does it lend any support to the 'of the god' theory popularised by James Frazer, Robertson Smith and others.(126) The necessity of obedience deserves underlining, especially in cases where the story says the person concerned failed to perform the prescribed rite. The emphasis seems to be not on obedience to a law or command, but on obedience as fidelity and faithfulness.

The fifth element in the structure of an Ifá myth states the post-incident result and the behaviour of the person directly concerned or of other people relatively affected. Frequently, this final element, whether it be a song or a proverb or the symbolic play on words purported to be the names of the priest or priests who were first connected with the discovery and use of the myth concerned, gives the clue to the significance of the signature-theme.

(b) The five-part structure of the ritual sequence

We now proceed to analyse and examine the ritual sequence derivable from and accompanying the Ifá myths. Once again, there are five parts, the first of which is divination. Some writers give the impression that Ifá is primarily a divinatory system. This impression is given its clearest expression by Bascom in the title of his book, Ifá Divination: Communication Between Gods and Men in West Africa.(127) Both the title and the sub-title are contestable. Bascom's book is, in fact, a collection of Ifá myths translated with an explanation of the patterns of the myths. It is not made clear in the book that Ifá is a ritual

---

(126) E.S. Waterhouse, The Dawn of Religion, Epworth Press, London, 1936, pp. 104f. Raymond Firth, "Offering and Sacrifice: Problems of Organization", in Lessa and Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion, Harper and Row, Lond., 2nd Edition, pp. 185f.

(127) W. Bascom, Ifá Divination...., Indiana University Press, 1969.

complex of which divination is only a part, and that the divinatory aspect is itself a ritual element in a larger complex ritual whole.

The divinatory act is a ritual in itself. To describe it in terms of communication is to use an easy model which does not convey the full significance. The introduction of the concept of God or the devil into processes of traditional religion is a temptation to which unwary scholars are vulnerable. If the concept of dynamism to which reference has been made above is true, the basic life-force entailed does not necessarily need to be personalised to make it valid.

In the Ifá system, divination is a ritual endeavour to discover the myth which is the most relevant and appropriate for the existential situation under consideration. The belief is that the divinatory process of casting the sixteen palm-nuts has power in itself. Both palm-nuts and the number sixteen are potent symbols. Together with the other steps in the divinatory process, they have revelatory power to indicate the right myth which has a paradigmatic relevance enough to give a clue to a present situation. Once the appropriate myth has been revealed, it has to be interpreted, according to the rules of Ifa myth-interpretation.

The second ritual element in the ritual complex which we call Ifa is the prescription of a medicinal remedy appropriate to the situation in hand. Medicine, whether therapeutic or otherwise, has an integral place in the Ifa system. It is the Ifa myth which can prescribe an appropriate medicine. This is partly because Ifá myths have symbolic references to medicinal ingredients. The physician or traditional chemist who prescribes independently of Ifá is called in Yoruba an adáhunsè, one who prescribes by himself, of his own wisdom and independent of the Ifá system. Medicine outside Ifa, by this definition, is a heresy. The process of identifying the appropriate medicine, the prescription, preparation and application of the same is a ritual process which is part of the ritual complex which we call Ifá.

Thirdly, the Ifá myth/ritual complex includes a ritual recital of the symbolic references to the medicinal ingredients. This, with a similar recital of the events *in illo tempore* commemorated by such symbolic references, is believed to have intrinsic power to make things happen. Ifá myths sometimes include the praise-names and praise-songs of gods or men. If the recital of references to objects is potent, the recital of the praise-names of gods is believed to be more potent still. An easy transition, from incantation or "from spell to prayer", is noticeable in this context. Both in the incantation or prayer, there may be an invocation or ritual recall of the paradigmatic oracle connected with the archetypal experience related in the relevant myth. When this takes place, the invocation is described as 'Àyájo' or the celebration of *that* momentous day long past.

The fourth ritual sequence is reached when the Ifá priest prescribes a formal 'sacrifice' appropriate both to a particular myth and to the existential situation of a person who is believed to be in need of the efficacies derivable from the sacrifice. The word 'sacrifice', like the word medicine used above, is only a vague and narrow approximation to the ẹbọ and ètùtù which the Ifá system includes in itself. The two words ẹbọ and ètùtù, used in different contexts in Ifá, roughly correspond to the distinction being made by anthropologists between expressive and instrumental ritual.

Unfortunately, because of the constant use of ẹbọ for sacrifice in the Yoruba Bible and liturgical translation, the word has largely taken to itself among Yoruba Christians a 'to feed the gods' interpretation of the 'Here is butter, give us cows' type. However, both ẹbọ and ètùtù are found to be highly symbolic and because of their association with myths the two, and especially the latter, are frequently a re-enactment and re-actualizing of the events narrated in the associated myths. Because such a re-enactment is believed to be potent for creativity, an ètùtù especially is aimed at the restoration of order, the resolution of conflicts and the general restoration of well-being.

The fifth step in the process relates to the practical life of a person in self-awareness and in social relationship. The person is given some practical or moral guidance. Many proverbs and moral aphorisms have their origin in this way in myths with or without the contextual stories. As such, the prescription of a formal ritual is generally followed with directives and a practical philosophy for daily living. Daily life itself is considered as a ritual and part of the continuous Ifá ritual which begins with divination as referred to above. The clearest illustration of this is found in the ritual ceremony for initiating a person into the Ifá system. When the initiation procedure as described by Parrinder has been completed,(128) the master of initiation addresses the initiate: "The act is done. You have been initiated. But you have still to initiate yourself. When you are about to climb a palmtree in your agricultural pursuit, make sure the climbing rope is safe and sure. When on a journey you have to cross a river, do it with all circumspection, making sure the water is not too deep nor the current too strong for you to go through. Ifá initiation is not an excuse for not using one's sense. The act is done. You have been initiated. Daily re-enact your initiation".

The five-part structure of an Ifá myth is reproduced in the structure of an Ifá ritual. Those five elements: Divination, Medicine, Incantation/Prayer, Ritual Ceremony, and Morality constitute the basic or elementary forms of the religious life according to the Ifa system. By this analysis we have developed and expanded the identification

---

(128) E.G. Parrinder, 1961, Op. cit. p. 144. The dialectic, evident in this address to the initiate, between the psychic and the practical is found not only in initiation but also in the use of medicine and of prayer, the diagnosis of an illness and the performance of rituals. With this phenomenon on the primal religion level, we note the parallel in Paul's injunction, "Work out your own salvation, for it is God that works in you" (Philippians 2: 13), and Oliver Cromwell's "Trust God and keep you powder dry".

of supernatural tools made by S.F. Nadel for Nupe Religion.(129) But a better term than 'supernatural tools' seems to be desirable. In any case, the use of the word 'supernatural' seems to stand in contradiction to Nadel's own earlier discussion of the term.(130) Rather, what we have here are 'pragmatic tools of existentialism,' the principles of which run through life on the 'religious', practical and 'secular' levels.

A word needs to be added here as comment on Nadel's observations about an implied hierarchy and alternativeness of tools in Nupe religion. Says Nadel: "There is some hierarchy of powers among the rituals, some being definitely stronger than others; nor are they all interchangeable".(131) This is different from what we have found in Ifa rituals among the Yoruba. There, the ritual sequences are all linked together and extend right on to practical life in day to day experiences. It begins from the corpus of myths themselves which are narratives of some ritual past. Divination identifies a relevant myth. The particular myth indicates symbolically an efficacious 'medicine'. The incantation is a recital of the inherent properties of the ingredients of the medicine. The injunction S'ebo kí ogun le je, ("Perform a ritual so that the medicine can be efficacious"), is a pointer to the fact that an ebo ritual becomes necessary just to give the full potency to the medicine. The only indication of a seeming hierarchy is suggested in the saying Iwa l'ebo awure, "Morality is supreme over incantation". This only seeks to emphasize the importance and indispensability of personal character.

---

(129) S.F. Nadel, Nupe Religion, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1954, pp. 34, 37, 65.

(130) Ibid. pp. 3f.

(131) Ibid. p. 105.

The question of its being an alternative is excluded since the anxieties associated with personal concern still make these 'pragmatic tools of existentialism' necessary even in spite of the will to goodness. The significance of the five-part structure of Yoruba myths and ritual will become clearer when we come to analyse the major 'competences' of Yoruba religion and the relevant tools available in the Ifa system for dealing with the human situation. The evidence so far adduced, however, proves that Ifá belongs to the Òrò - type of religion. Though the ancestral heroes and divinities connected with the myths and early history of the people may develop into the Ìsin - type, the understanding of them as a characterization of vital forces disposed them to be used as instruments in Òrò - type rituals.

III. "ETHIOPIANISM" IN THE YORUBA CHURCH

"What matters primarily for the purposes of this study are the thought-forms, the unspoken assumptions by which people live, and these, one feels, will not be affected by European civilization nearly as quickly as the Africans' outward lives.

But just in this respect there is one important difference between the 6th-century Church and present-day Africa. Gregory (of Tours) and his colleagues shared in all essentials the background and outlook on life of their flock. The modern missionary in Africa does not. His way of thinking is radically different from that of the African. As a result, the African Church must be described as an amalgam. Its leaders look Janus-like in two directions at once; they look back to the traditions of the missionary; missionary's home Church as interpreted to them by the and they look back into the African past, so thoroughly understood, but so little help on the steep upward road".

W.V. Stone, "The Dark Ages and 20th Century Africa", Scottish Journal of Theology, June 1955.

III. "ETHIOPIANISM" IN THE YORUBA CHURCH

1. TWO INDIGENOUS RESPONSE MOVEMENTS

In September 1842, the Methodist Missionary, the Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, landed at Badagry and subsequently visited Abeokuta. He came at the invitation of a group of Egba freed slaves who had become Christians during their sojourn in Sierra Leone. It is usual to date from his arrival the beginning of Yoruba Christianity.(1) But the possibility of an earlier contact is significant since it could have left some traces in the theological ideas of the traditional religion.(2)

---

1. See F.D. Walker, A Hundred Years in Nigeria, Atlantis Press, London, 1942. pp. 1ff.

2. Of the existence of the work of Christian missionaries further inland in the Benin Kingdom during the fifteenth century at the latest, there is no doubt. "The first attempt to establish the church in the territory now known as Nigeria was made in the last two decades of the fifteenth century as mentioned by Father Maffei, S.J., in the work History of the Indies.... Most historians claim that John Affonso d'Aveire who visited Benin City in 1486 was the first European to meet the Ọba (or King) of Benin. Bearing in mind that Portuguese explorers never travelled without Christian missionaries we can assume that Father Maffei's statement was quite accurate". Martin J. Bane, S.M.A., The Popes and Western Africa: An Outline of Mission History, 1460's - 1960's Alba House, Staten Island, N.Y. 10314, 1960, p. 134. How far they came further south through the jungle to Ile-Ife and Old Oyo is not known. Historical investigation has still to be devoted also to the question of the route used by those Portuguese missionaries who laboured in Benin. Did they go via the Niger Delta, or overland from Ẹpẹ or Badagry, or even from Whyday or Porto Novo further west? If they took an overland route, they must have passed over the main Yoruba territory. Or even if they entered through the Niger Delta, did they travel westwards towards and into the then Oyo kingdom? There is strong evidence that they travelled from Lagos and possibly through Ijebu and Warri inland. "In the year 1544 there came to Portugal, the King of Benin, a Caffre by nationality, and he became a Christian. On his return to West Africa, this king Awhrogba, resided for some time in Lagos island which was then a part of his kingdom." M.J. Bane, op. cit, pp. 135-141. But the Yoruba people were not all known by that name at that time. The Sacra Congregazione correspondence of the 17th century on the mission to Benin for example, did not speak of the Yoruba by that name but rather of the Ijebu, Lycomin etc. For this purpose, it is not enough to study the history of the Yoruba in isolation. A fresh look has to be taken at the history of the Benin, the Dahomean and the Yoruba together.

Scattered evidence abounds to support the suggestion of a much earlier contact with Christianity than those of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century missionaries themselves sometimes felt that they were treading on ground trodden upon by other missionaries before them. The C.M.S. Missionary, Rev. Thomas Harding, in 1899 made such an entry in his diary after a visit to Ife:

> "We went to see the renowned carvings of Ife. First we entered a grove outside the town, and there in a tiny hut were two pots. Underneath each pot was a terra cotta image. Under the first was the head of a man, and under the other was the head of a woman and child. These bore unmistakable evidence of civilized work. The features were of European form, and it seemed as if that (sic) those figure-heads, perhaps of Joseph, Mary and the child were all that was left of it."(3)

It is probable, however, that it was not until the early years of the 19th century that European explorers penetrated from Badagry on the coast through the Yoruba country to old Òyó. Significant landmarks in these contacts and subsequent relationships were the slave trade and its ultimate abolition, the coming of Christian missionaries in 1842 and the designation of the whole coast as the White Man's Grave. In spite of this there came the colonial era and Lugard's so-called 'Indirect Rule'. Thomas Birch Freeman was sandwiched in between the early explorers and Lugard. The coming of Christianity which he represented heralded a heightened sense of freedom and identity which ultimately led to a national sovereighty in which the Yoruba are united with other people in modern Nigeria.

The period covered in this study, 1890-1940, corresponds roughly with the second half-century of Christianity among the Yoruba.(4) This period

---

3. CMS Intelligencer 1889-1902, p. 448, CMS Archives G3/A2/O 1900/34 for date 30/12/99. see further Idowu, 1962, pp. 204-208.

4. The first half-century has been treated by J.F.A. Ajayi (1965). The second half-century which we here devote attention to covers the period which Ayandele (1966) has examined for a social and political analysis, and which Jebster (1964), H.W. Turner (1967) and Peel (1968) have studied for the history of specific church groups. Our study builds on all these and concentrates on a content analysis of two identifiable Church movements which in varying ways illustrate the interaction between Christianity and the host-religion, Yoruba Traditional Religion.

was marked by a number of indigenous movements of response generally described as African Independent Churches. In the study of such Churches, a distinction has been made between the "Ethiopians" on the one hand and the "Zionists" on the other.(5)

Ethiopianism here has no reference at all to the theology or ecclesiastical practices of the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Rather, it is a description of the evident awareness of Africanness in the people's religious understanding, and their belief that the hope in Psalm 68:31 that Ethiopia shall stretch its arms to God has reference to the whole African race. By "Ethiopianism" are designated the church movements which consciously built on this sentimental aspiration.

"Zionism" then means that movement represented chiefly by the Aladura which restricted itself to religious forms which could be traced to the Bible but which ultimately turned out to be an unconscious adaptation of Christianity along the lines of indigenous religious patterns. Thus in this thesis, the terms are used not only for the Independent Churches but for all the Churches in Yorubaland, whether they originated from the work of foreign missionaries or were founded locally in independency.

In this chapter, we shall first deal with Ethiopianism, the restlessness in some quarters with the form in which Christianity was brought, and the entertainment of a hope that it could be reformulated in other ways and in other categories to satisfy to a greater extent Yoruba religious expectations. In subsequent chapters, we shall examine the basis of the Zionist stance and trace the different efforts which have been made towards a reformulation.

2. THE PHENOMENON OF "ETHIOPIANISM"

The policy of Henry Venn towards building up in the CMS mission areas of Africa a "self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending" Church triggered off a chain of reaction in many directions. Venn's appointment as General Secretary of CMS in 1842 coincided with the beginning of missionary

---

5. For the use of the terms "Ethiopianism" and "Zionism" in African Church History, see V.E. Hayward(ed.), African Independent Church Movements, Edinburgh House Press, London, 1963, p. 71; J.W. Fernandez "African Religious Movements - Types and Dynamics". The Journal of Modern African Studies, 2,4 (1964), pp. 531-549. Our use of the terms in this thesis stands midway between the typology adopted by the Mindolo Consultation which restricted the use to "African Independent Churches" and F.B. Welbourn's plea that except for purely local usage the terms be discarded in deference to the need to look for a more universal typology. For Welbourn's seminal paper, see his "A note on Types of Religious Society" in C.G. Baeta(ed.), Christianity in Tropical Africa. OUP, 1968, pp. 131-138.

work among the Yoruba. In 1845, only three years after his appointment, a "Native Agency Committee" was set up in London for the implementation of this policy. The mandate of the Committee was primarily "to encourage the social and religious improvement of Africa by means of her own sons". The direct objectives towards which the Committee worked can be summarised from the series of "Instructions" sent out to its missionaries in Africa. These included the creation of a Native Church, independent of foreign aid and superintendence. There should be a systematic handing over of the work and its superintendence to the most able native pastors and bishops. The goal of the Church should be the full assumption of a national character in order that it could ultimately supersede the denominational distinctions being introduced by foreign missionary societies. Such a national Church should be at liberty to change its ceremonies and in every way adapt itself to the national taste.(6)

Venn's ideas undoubtely influenced the policy of other missionary societies than his own. Even in those far-off days there were consultations with missionary executives across the Atlantic; and Venn was able to exchange his ideas with other missionaries on a wide scale. But the intention at home was one thing, and the outworking of the ideas on the mission fields another. Also, the tensions in the field of one society influenced the working of other societies.

The consecration of Samuel Àjàyí Crowther in June 1864 and his appointment over a diocese which virtually stretched "from the River Niger to the Nile" was a vindication of Venn's policy. "It is expedient that the arrangements which may be made in the Missions should from the first have reference to the ultimate settlement of the native church upon the ecclesiastical basis of an indigenous episcopate, independent of foreign aid or superintendency".(7)

But Venn's vision was frustrated from the first. In the first place, over this issue of African leadership he was opposed by missionaries on the field and a clique of their supporters in England who had no

---

6. See W. Knight, Memoirs of Henry Venn, pp. 285f.; Henry S. Wilson(ed.) Origin of West African Nationalism, Macmillan, 1969, pp. 131ff.

7. W. Knight, The Missionary Secretariat of Henry Venn, 1880, p. 415.

faith in the ability of the African and who could not bear the idea of Europeans serving under African leadership. Crowther and his work were denigrated.(8) He died in frustration during the last hours in 1891. Along the whole west coast there was wide-spread protest against his treatment. It was in the cloud of the fury which followed the denigration and death of Crowther that Bishops Ọlúwọ̀lé and C. Phillips were appointed as Assistant Bishops in 1893. The former was stationed in Lagos and the latter in Ọdẹ̀-Ọ̀ndó in the interior where he had creditably led the mission since its inception there in 1876.(9)

Another unfortunate factor in the outworking of the Native Agency concept in Venn's policy was that it quickly led to the development of a subject-agent-object attitude on the part of some native workers. The Native Agency turned out to be an ecclesiastical version of Lugard's later 'Indirect Rule' system. The African bishops and clergy found themselves wedged in between the Missions and their own people just as the Emirs and the Ọ̀bá found themselves restricted under the colonial administration. The only difference was that the mission workers did not have the traditional rule, authority and power which bolstered up the position of the Emirs and Ọ̀bá. This was the disadvantageous position in which the two Assistant Bishops, Oluwole and Phillips, found themselves throughout their period of service. But there were other mission workers who developed a nationalistic attitude and an evangelistic zeal of unquestionable integrity. It was they who carried forward the original intentions of Venn's policy, and who came later to be described as "Ethiopians".

In our use of the term here, we are not confining it to separatist groups which later identified themselves as African, Ethiopian or Native Churches. We take it that there are many Christians in the larger-

---

8. E.A. Ayandele. The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914, Longmans, 1966, pp. 207-228.

9. Ayandele (1966), pp. 228-9.

established churches who were Ethiopians in their conviction and utterances. Samuel Àjàyí Crowther himself shared something of this feeling of religious nationalism, not to speak of Edward B. Blyden and Bishop James Johnson[10] (popularly known as Holy Johnson) who were the main advocates of the idea and whose writings and statements were frequently quoted in extenso by the later separatists.

The Christan Mission to West Africa was built both on the theory of the inferiority of the African as a 'race' and on the theory of the invalidity of African culture and tradtions. It is difficult to say which one was predominant at one time or another. The two concepts were fully bound together in the attitude of the missionaries and of the Christian people who sent them forth. The racial issue has been referred to briefly in the Crowther episode. The religious attitude must now be treated. Against both, the Yoruba Ethiopians had to contend.

The general assessment of African traditional religion by these missionaries of the nineteenth century was that it was a palpable delusion.[11] As such, it was assumed that all that was necessary was to "argue against the vanity of their gods" and "expose the folly of their worship".[12] Freeman's journals were, in places, full of details about his method of approach to persuade the people of their religious folly. As he went from village to village in the then Gold Coast and among the Yoruba in Nigeria, only occasionally did he allow himself to be persuaded that there might be more in what was before him than met the eye. One one such occasion, he had to admit, "although I pitied the people on account of their superstitions, yet I could not help admiring their apparant sincerity."[13] Nevertheless, he generally stuck to his original impression which, after all, was in

---

10. For Blyden, see Robert W. July (1968), pp. 208-233, Ayandele (1966), pp. 217f, 250f, 329. For James Johnson, see Ayandele, Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African Nationalism, 1836-1917, Frank Cass, London, 1970.

11. T.B. Freeman, Ms. Journal, MMS Archives, London, Vol. 1, pp. 269f, Vol. 3 pp. 130f. T.B. Freeman, "Reminiscences and Incidents... (Typescript), MMS Archieves, London, pp. 374-379.

12. Bishop Crowther's Experiences in West Africa, S.P.C.K., London, 1892, pp. 28f, but of. p. 15.

13. Ms Journal vol. 3, pp. 130f.

accord with the predominant missionary theology of the age and reminiscent of the view of the prophet Isaiah and the convictions of the Psalmists.(14) The parallel between Freeman's concept of traditional religion and his evangelistic method on the one hand and these Biblical passages on the other is clear when we examine the following entries in his journals. "I told them that their fetish was of no value to them".(15) On some occasions, he could go beyond telling the people that their objects of worship were no more than "a mere piece of wood, a shell, a rotten egg, or the fruit of some tree". He could demonstrate it practically by "setting up a piece of wood, knocking it down and showing them that it could not get up again, much less render tham any assistance".(16)

If the people themselves as "worshippers" could be granted some benefit of the doubt as to their "apparent sincerity", the same benefit did not seem to have been extended to the cultic priests. Rather, they were regarded as charlatans deliberately deceiving the common people for their own ends. The whole thing was regarded as being "largely the work of a few imposters, the 'fetich' priests" who were "deluding these poor benighted people, and keeping them in a state of sevile bondage to answer their own base purpose".(17)

Of course, on the whole, the above description of traditional religion is basically the interpretation which has been known by the now discreditted term "fetichism". It must be noted, however, that it was felt to be coupled with some awareness of a theistic belief among the people. When Freeman came to a village, he asked the people "if they knew who made a tree which was growing over their heads and affordihg them a shade from the rays of the sun, They answered, 'God made it'. I asked them if they knew God, but they acknowledged their total ignorance of him experimentally".(18)

---

14. Isaiah 44: 9-20; Psalm 135: 15-18.
15. Ms. Journal vol. 1, pp. 124f.
16. ibid pp. 144f.
17. ibid. pp. 269f. cf pp. 247f.
18. ibid pp. 122f.

It is apparent that Freeman found it difficult to believe that the people could know God, although they had taken the initiative in giving information about him as the creator. In any case, incidents like this should indicate that missionaries of the period, like Freeman in this particular case, were aware that the fetichism explanation did not cover the whole of the 'religious' scene confronting them. Theistic explanations had to be conceded though they might be qualified in terms of poly-daemonism if not of polytheism. The distinction which needed to be made, as we have noted, is whether the religion was the Òrò-type or the Ìsìn-type.

The decade between 1880 and 1890 in the Churches along the West African coast was a period of intense antagonism between European and African clergy. With the increase in European economic and political interests in the West African countries, a corresponding change was effected in missionary policy. It moved away from the vision of African-led Churches towards the entrenchment of European control in the administration of the life of the Churches. This relationship of tension, conflict and antagonism cannot be fully understood apart from the general racist attitude of the European towards the African. The tension was felt not only in the Church but also between European and African traders leading on the whole to a strong nationalistic feeling among the African educated elite. The centres of the storm could be identified in different places, at Freetown in Sierra Leone, at Lagos and the Niger Mission in Nigeria. As we have seen above, it formed the bacground to the attach on Bishop Crowther. In 1888, it led also to the inauguration of the United Native Baptist Church, and later in 1891 to a breakaway from Breadfruit Church (Anglican) in Lagos to establish the United Native African Church (UNA).(19) .

It was inevitable that the arguments on the side of the protesting Africans, both within the Church and outside it, against the treatment being meted out to them should take a nationalistic turn. "Ethiopianism" was as much a nationalist protest as it was an example of evangelistic and ecclesiastical zeal.

---

19. For a list of breakaway churches and others from 1888 to 1918, see J.B. Webster (1964), p. 94. On racial hatred see Ayandele (1966) p. 210f.

The objectives of West African Ethiopianism in the Church might be stated in brief as follows:

1. The founding of a truly African Church managed and controlled by Africans and completely free from 'the leading strings of foreign supervision'.(20)
2. Self-support in the African Church.(21)
3. The evangelisation of Africa by Africans, a real African missionary movement, to stem the tide of Islam.(22)
4. The elevation of the African Personality and the cultivation of racial respect in the race struggle.(23)
5. Insistence on Christian social ethics and principles for African affairs, e.g. in race relations, in matters of slavery and the slave-trade, in British administration of the West African countries.(24)
6. Cultivation of respect for African customs and institutions and the adoption of such of them as were not necessarily antagonistic to Christianity.(25)
7. The use of African liturgy, formularies and ceremonialism.(26)
8. The development of an African theology.(27)

These are worthy ideals, and in line with the vision of Henry Venn. Their implementation, however, was not facilitated by Church officials, white or black. Some Nigerian churchmen holding influential positions felt they were too idealistic and any attempt to implement them premature. Others even thought they were impossible to realize and therefore not worth pursuing. There were a few, however, who persistently pursued these goals especially during

---

20. Ayandele (1966) pp. 187-188, 200f., 221f., 24f.
21. Self-support was the burden of Lijadu's initial commitment. See below under E.M. Lijadu, cf. Ayandele (1966), pp. 85f. 190f., 200, 296f.
22. Ayandele ibid, pp. 186, 206, 220f, 238.
23. ibid pp. 210, 242f, 278f.
24. ibid pp. 197f., 203, 237f.
25. ibid pp. 187..,242ff., 254ff.
26. ibid pp. 187, 264ff., 273.
27. ibid pp. 206, 220.

the second fifty years of the Church's history. Their role has scarcely been noticed in the study of the growth of the Yoruba Church. Such was the Rev. E.M. Líjàdù in far away Ondo whose effort reverberated and influenced other efforts in Lagos, some two hundred miles away on the coast. The study of the evangelistic possibility of relating Christianity to the Ifá background of the Yoruba was only a later development of his endeavour. Nevertheless it will be illuminating to take a close look at the general story of this man and of those who followed up his efforts.

3. THE ZEAL OF E.M. LIJADU OF ONDO

Since 1888 when the Native Baptist Church was formed, Nigeria has come to know several schismatic churches, sects, prophetic movements and other African Independent Churches. The Evangelist Band Mission of the Rev. E.M. Lijadu deserves to be treated separately as an organisation sui generis. It started as a formally recognised and accepted separate institution within the Anglican Church and it was only after this period that it had to stand by itself as an African Independent Church. It is the story of those twenty years that we wish to sketch out briefly in these pages.

The circumstances which led to the founding of the Band centred on the ideas of the Rev. E.M. Lijadu about the need for a voluntary, unpaid, and self-supporting Ministry. Incidentally, this is a subject which has not caught the imagination of the ecumenical

movement in this generation[28] The story of the ministry of this Nigerian clergyman especially during the period 1898-1926 will undoubtedly be a contribution to the on-going discussion of new forms and support of the Ministry.

The significance of Mr. Lijadu for current discussion in the ecumenical movement, however, goes beyond these two themes. The question of indigenisation, and especially the indigenisation of theology, similarly exercised his thinking. It will be fitting therefore to examine also his venturesome interpretation of the basic themes of the New Testament in terms of indigenous Yoruba thought, particularly of Ifá themes.

We will take time to spell out the story of his ecclesiastical nationalism and his practical proposal for personal involvement in a scheme for the rethinking and restructuring of the ministry.[29] We believe this to be necessary for a full understanding of the man's background and the motivation which ultimately constrained him to undertake his theological explorations. It needs to be appreciated that the man whose study of Ifá became so significant to his Christian theology

28. It is one of the strange phenomena of Christian history that two saintly souls, one a Yoruba in Nigeria and the other an Englishman resident in far away China caught this same vision of a self-supporting ministry at about the same period. Lijadu was certainly not influenced by Roland Allen for the latter resigned his benefice only in 1907 while E.M. Lijadu resigned his seven years earlier. For the story of Roland Allen, see David Paton (ed.), Reform of the Ministry: A Study in the Work of Roland Allen, Lutterworth Press, London, 1968.

    The Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches later got down to studying this issue in the 1960s. See, for example, the document presented to the Divisional Committee of the Commission at its meeting in Paris in August 1962: A Tent-Making Ministry Towards a More Flexible Form of Ministry, W.C.C., Geneva, 1962.

    In December 1974, a few months before the Church in Ondo celebrated its centenary, the Methodist Church Nigeria accepted into the ministry and commissioned fifteen "Tent-making Ministers". The Anglican Dioceses in Nigeria have also in recent years accepted a number of "graduate ordinands" earning their living in other employments.

29. See Appendix I below.

grew up in, and was strongly possessed of, an evangelistic and missionary zeal the equal of which has hardly been found again among the Yoruba during the past three-quarters of a century.

4. LIJADU'S THEOLOGICAL PUBLICATIONS

In 1897, Lijadu published a small book called Ifá, devoted to an attack against Yoruba paganism especially as expressed in the Ifá cult. Extensive use was made of stanzas and stories from Odù Ifá to demonstrate the inadequate understanding of God which he then believed was expressed in the Ifá religious system. These quotations of Ifá myths are of great value, especially as he made sure that he quoted not only the main stanzas as is now generally done in any reference to the Odù Ifá, but also the full story narrated on each occasion. The length of the stories frequently disturbs the flow of the theological discussion and commentary which was his original intention. But it is now very valuable to have the stories themselves since they had not been committed to print before Lijadu did so. Thus, Lijadu became the first person ever to write down and publish the Odù-Ifá at about the same time as the Bible was being published in Yoruba.

Most of the full stories recorded by Lijadu are hard to come by today. Even the specialists in the Odù-Ifá, Babalawo, remember the precis of each Odu only in stanza form. That is all they need for their clients. The long story explaining each stanza is now often forgotten. Of the one hundred and three Odù-Ifá quoted by Lijadu in his Ifá, as many as thirty-six are given in full story form. And of the seventy-six Odù-Ifá quoted in his later book, Orunmila (sic), only a dozen are not related in full story form. Thus, Lijadu has passed down to us at least one hundred Ifa myths which are rememberdd only through his having recorded them in his apologetic undertaking.(30)

---

30. There is an obvious parallel here to Justin Martyr's Contra Celsum where our khowledge of 2nd-century Gnosticism came mainly through the description in Justin's book.

When Lijadu published his Ifá in 1897, there was no indication given that he planned a sequel to that book. But when Orunmila appeared in 1908, it was marked as Book II, and reference were made in it to Ifá which was then referred to as "our Book I".

Although the book Orúnmila was inscribed as Book II, it is evident that between the writing of his first book and that of the second a significant development had taken place in the thinking of Lijadu and his approach to traditional religion.(31) The first one denounced the beliefs and practices of "our fathers" (a pharase which he constantly used in both books). The second book, however, was very sympathetic towards Ifá religious beliefs.

The method of treatment in Book II was that of taking one by one the attributes of Orunmila especially as contained in the praise-names ascribed to him by his worshippers, giving a running commentary and exegesis of the titles, explaining in the process the relevant aspects of Yoruba beliefs, and then at the end of each exposition referring to the Bible passages where the parallel ideas are taken to be expressed. At this point, Lijadu sometimes simply hints at, and other times openly draws theological conclusions particularly for a Yoruba understanding of Christ and His work. It became necessary for him, therefore, to list the praise-names of Orunmila as related to him by the babalawo.

The main thrust of the book turned out to be evidence that the Yoruba man of religion had a premonition of a Deliverer, a Saviour, One who was to come. These hopes and expectations were centred on the person of Orunmila, and the conclusion was drawn or implied repeatedly throughout the book that Orunmila was the type of Him who in Jesus Christ became flesh among men.

---

31. In a public lecture in 1887, Lijadu launched a passionate attack on "The Effects of Foreign Literature and Science Upon the Natives of the Yoruba Country". It took him twenty years before he was able to extend this concern to the religious realm.

Lijadu's Òrúnmìlà is of great significance in the confrontation between Yoruba beliefs and the Christian Faith. It is the only treatise available in the Yoruba language devoted to a genuine dialogue. His earlier book Ifá, is an apologeitc for the Christian Faith in an outmoded (though until now all too popular) form. It leaves no room for dialogue since it sees nothing of real worth in the Ifá understanding of God and of morality. His Òrúnmìlà is different. It is a genuine theological discourse permitting the other side to have a say.(32)

It is clear that by the time of the appearance of this second book, Lijadu had planned to write at least one more book, in the series, or possibly two. Book II and its sequel(s) were to deal with the praise-names of Òrúnmìlà with which this book started.

In his reflection on the praise-names of Òrúnmìlà, Lijadu came to realise that some of the attributes had reference to Òrúnmìlà's heavenly or divine nature, and that the others related to his earthly or human nature. He had discovered also that the teaching of Òrúnmìlà could be collected together and arranged in a system. For Book II, therefore, he selected only such phrases from Òrúnmìlà's praise-names which could be interpreted as related to his supernatural nature and functions. The others he left for the books which were to follow. Unfortunately, those books were never written, presumably because, after completing Book II, Lijadu's time was fully occupied with much evangelistic travelling and the training of students in his Evangelist Hall in Ondo. A reading of his diary during this perio d,

---

32. This was the typological pattern of the earliest Christian sermons in the Acts of the Apostles. That was how St. Matthew was written. That was the same style adopted by the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The same patterns were later reproduced in the biblical exegesis of the early Fathers of the 2nd to the 4th centuries. The background material used by them was, of course, the Old Testament, especially when in the Biblical material the proclamation was directed to the Jews for whom the Old Testament had both national and religious meaning. But whenever non-Jewish material was available, there was no hesitation in making references to such material and using it in the argument in the presentation of the Gospel to non-Jews. (cf. the use of the Logos doctrine in John 1, and the method of presentation of Paul's arguments in the sermon to the Athenians in Acts 17:22f.

1908ff., shows that he spent about six months of each year travelling in the Ikale area, about four months in his Ondo headquarters, and some two months in other parts of the country, e.g. Lagos and Abeokuta.

At a later period in his travels, Lijadu took the opportunity to research into forms of traditional religion among the Ikale with special reference to their regard for and treatment of Twin children; Secret Societies, especially the Ìjìmò Ògúnègbà; Ancestor cults described by him as annual and public, occasional and private rituals related to betrothal; the Naming Ceremony and Fetish Oaths. Chiefs responded to his preaching and, on conversion, were able to share with him details of their past religious life and practice.(33)

The story of the Rev. E.M. Lijadu has been told in some detail in the Appendix in order to show his churchmanship in the context of the ferment in the national ecclesiatical awareness of his day. It is necessary at this stage to acknowledge once again the debt we owe to his writings for the valuable material on Yoruba religion which he has carefully preserved.

The story of his resignation from the Anglican ministry in Nigeria has also been referred to. It is necessary, however to correct an impression which has been given that he left because the theological opinions in his publications offended the ecclesiastical susceptibilities of his day.(34) On the contrary there was enthusiasm in the Church for his publications. Perhaps they were even accepted too readily without criticism. Bishop S.C. Phillips of Ondo wrote a commendatory preface to the first book. In the author's foreword to the second edition eleven years after the original publication, the author made reference to and quoted some of the letters he had received from Church workers in appreciation for the books, The CMS Bookshop received permission after his death for a further edition of the first

34. Prof. Ayandele in op. cit. p. 264 has quoted the wrong reason for Lijadu's priest's licence being withdrawn by his bishop. It was due to his act in ordhiningmen 'unconstitutionally', not because of his theological views. It is striking that on Lijadu's death in 1926, CMS published an obituary praising his missionary zeal and contribution.

33. See E.M. Lijadu's Annual Letter for 1907, reviewing the Mission activities of his Evangelist Bank for 1901-1905.

book under their own imprint. In Leisure Hours, the local Anglican monthly magazine, serialized the contents seventy years after the first edition when the other impressions had gone out of print.

The second book, however, was overshadowed by the success of the earlier book. There is no evidence that it was ever reprinted but we have seen a copy with slight corrections in the handwriting of the author indicating that he was perhaps getting it ready for a second impression. His preoccupation with the administrative problems of his organization in the years afterwards made this impossible. Church Order had taken precedence over exposition of the faith.

Also, by 1908 when Lijadu's Òrúnmìlà was published, West African Ethiopianism had on the whole switched its main emphasis and strategy to education and "the making of an elite". It should be remembered that in 1873, there was the launching of a "Society for the Promotion of Religion and Education in Lagos".(35) The events surrounding the denigrating of Bishop Crowther had brought in some frustration and disillusionment in matters of religion. Although James Johnson himself had by this date published his book on Yoruba Heathenism, his consecration and subsequent appointment as Bishop on the Niger meant that he had to give more of his attention to ecclesiastical administration. This involved continuous travelling between his seat in Lagos and his diocese on the Niger. He had no time to give to further theological reflection and writing.

Others in the movement considered that theological innovation was a field in which they had no expertise and from which they had better refrain. But, as for educational planning, their very training and individual competence compelled them to action. All the same, a few experiments in religious innovation were undertaken by individual agitated souls.

---

35. Ayandele (1966) pp. 185, 189.

5. T.A.J. ÒGÚNBÍYÍ

E.M. Líjàdù and T.A.J. Ògúnbíyí were ministerial contemporaries and fellow-workers. On January 18, 1899 they were both together in Ilé-Ifè and Mòdákéké enquiring, on the direction of the CMS secretary in Lagos, into the possibilities of having a resident evangelist stationed in one of the two towns for work in both places. In fact, T.A.J. Ògúnbíyí was then a Catechist in Akure. He was not new in the area but had been connected with the Òndó Mission from the beginning of his own work as a Mission Agent. Having been trained at the C.M.S. Institution from 1886 to 1889 he commenced service as a schoolmaster in January 1890 in Òndó and remained there until 1892 when he was moved to Àbéòkúta. From Àbéòkúta he went for a short period of further training in Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone and then returned to Àkúré as a Catechist. In this capacity, he worked energetically for some five years before he was ordained into the ministry. His ordination as a deacon took place in St. Stephen's, Òndó, on December 17, 1899, the first ordination service to be held among the Òndó. The ordination charge was given by the Rev. S. Òyèbòdé then of Ilesha, from the text I Cor. 3:9. "For we are God's fellow-workers, ye are God's husbandry, God's building".

During the period in Àkúré, he played an active role with the political power, the British, in bringing in the peace, order and civilization which were considered part of the mission of the Church in the area. His activities in putting down twin-murder in Àkúré and neighbouring villages were notable. By the time the controversy over Lijadu's proposal became public, Ògúnbíyí was already a sympathizer with, and supporter of, Lijadu's ideas. He himself later became a non-resident member of the "Evangelist Band". In 1902, he was transferred to Holy Trinity, Èbúté Èrò, in Lagos. Here he continued his activities as a supporter and also a canvasser for Líjàdù's project. In the report of his first year in charge of

Ebute Ero, Ogunbiyi listed a number of people who had been an encouragement and inspiration to him, and who had given him special advice and encouragement when necessary.(36) E.M. Lijadu far away in Ondo was one of them. It may be noted that R.A. Coker of Ijebu, another sympathizer with Lijadu's efforts, was another name on the list. This would be no mere courtesy for, as Ogunbiyi himself pointed out in the report, he was the youngest minister the congregation had ever had. The group photograph of the Parochial Committee published with the report emphasises the difference between his age and that of the congregation he was appointed to lead. But with such personalities as the Revs. E.M. Lijadu and R.A. Coker as his inspiration, he must have been a leader beyond his years. In 1908, when Lijadu was away in England attending the Pan-Anglican Congress, Ogunbiyi helped to look after Lijadu's evangelistic field on the Ikale Waterside.

But Ogunbiyi did more than simply support Lijadu's vision for an indigenous church life. He was himself a man of original ideas and ingenious practical endeavours. Those who knew him have called attention to his characteristic love of the esoteric and to the mystical nature of his thinking. These must be taken as a clue to his peculiar approach to religious formulations in general and practical Christian life in particular. During his youthful days, he became fascinated with the Adamuorisha, a Lagos cult associated with burial custom and ancestral commemorations. Significantly enough, on All Saints' Day 1914, T.A.J. Ogunbiyi opened, in memory of his father, a "Chief Ogunbiyi Memorial Chapel" at the Ikoyi burial ground in Lagos. He stated three purposes which the mortuary chapel would serve: a place where the priest could robe or unrobe for burial services at the cemetry, a place for "churching private funerals", and a place for religious devotions for individuals visiting the tombs of their departed friends and relations. It was not surprising that on Monday 8th January 1917, he removed the remains of his dead father from

---

36. CMS Archieves G3/A2/O, 1904/154.

their resting place for over thirty years and had them re-interred inside the "Chief Ogunbiyi Memorial Chapel".

T.A.J. Ogunbiyi had been earlier connected with the "Christian Ogboni Society" which was started by some Christians in Abeokuta in 1900.(37) There was a controversy in the Anglican Church of which the Christian Ogboni were at that time members as to the propriety of naming the movement christian. As a result, the name was changed in 1914 to "Reformed Ogboni Fraternity" (R.O.F.). However, a Pastoral Letter circulated by Bishops Tugwell and Oluwole in 1916 indicated the idolatrous nature of the cult and warned Christians, especially priests, who had become initiated or were contemplating initiation into it. The debate continues today. The religious questions are now mixed up with issues of nationalism and of membership of all sorts of Secret Societies, freemasonries and Lodges. R.O.F. activities were suspended from 1916. Ogunbiyi's licence as a clergyman was withdrawn in the heat of the controversy. But in 1930 R.O.F. activities were resumed, and Ogunbiyi founded his "Highway Mission" which was primarily the centre of R.O.F. publicity and administration. The Reformed Ogboni Fraternity still exists, frowned upon not only because of its religious ideas, but also for its socio-political influence, considered by some to be pernicious and by others as completely irrelevant in the dynamics of contemporary Nigeria.

T.A.J. Ogunbiyi was also the author of "Iwé Itan Ifa, Agbigba, Yanrin Tite....."(38) which was printed before the death of the author but on his own instruction was not released for public reading until after his death. It is a book on divination, written ostensibly by a practising diviner seeking to encourage divination, and has nothing at all in it to suggest that its author was in fact a Christian priest. The book was "launched" at the funeral wake with a

---

37. Ayandele (1966), p. 271ff.
38. T.A.J. Ogunbiyi, Iwe Itan Ifa, Agbigba, Yanrin Tite, ati Owo Merindinlogun, Ife-Olu Printing Works Lagos.

free copy given to every R.O.F. member there present. It has been suggested[39] that he released it posthumously since after his earlier controversy with the Church, he was only in the 1940s restored to office when Bishop Vining, himself a Mason, became the Bishop of Lagos.

T.A.J. Ogunbiyi has been generally recognized as the founder of the R.O.F. But attention also needs to be given to his connection with other aspects of church life and thought and his contribution to the growth of particular trends in spirituality. We note also T.A.J. Ogunbiyi's publication of books of Prayer: Bánúsọ, and Tètè-dá-mī-lóhùn[40] with a different special prayer for each day of the week and month of the year. The use of special 'names' of God with each such prayer is a notable characteristic of the books. There is no doubt that Ogunbiyi himself had in his mind the idea which led many Christians and non-Christians to buy his books: viz, that each day or each month has its own cosmic significance deriving from mythical ideas about the creation of the world or from planetary associations with each such day or month.

In the early part of 1912, Ogunbiyi travelled out of Nigeria overseas. His journey at that time was a kind of spiritual pulgrimage. He deliberately set out to discover for himself the roots of Christianity in greater depth than he had been taught by the missionaries. He paid a visit to the Holy Land and collected several "sacred" curios, including a bottle of water from the River Jordan. Then he went to England and seized the opportunity to attend the Keswick Convention. Ogunbiyi was a very impressionable man. The Convention had a great impact on his own religious understanding and gave him a distinct spiritual experience. He felt that God had called him to make available to Christians in Nigeria the blessings of Keswick. So, on his return to Nigeria, Ogunbiyi became the founder in 1912 of Lagos (Keswick) Convention, an interdenominational evangelical movement

---

39. Information given by Baba Agbegilere, Mr. O. Sobáyọ-Sówọlu, interviewed in Lagos in October 1970.

40. Printed at the Lisabi Press, Ibadan, n.d.

which is still very active in Lagos and which lives to call attention to the pietistic ideas which are associated with the annual Keswick Conventions in England.

According to the reminiscence of Dr. J.O. Lucas who was present at the first Convention in Lagos later in 1912, emphasis was placed on the place of Christ in the believer's heart, the Sovereignty of Christ, and the person of Christ as the Fount of Life, the Redeemer, the enabling and sustaining Author of grace, and the believer's all in all. "The Convention is meant to focus attention on Jesus Christ the Saviour of sinners in whom all his followers are united as branches are united to the vine".(41) Apparently, unlike Lijadu, T.A.J. Ogunbiyi could not carry his Christological views and intentions clearly into the religious explorations and innovations of his later life.

6. ADEDÈJI ÌSHÒLÁ (1885 - 1950)

One of the prominent members of Holy Trinity Church Ebute-Ero Lagos, under the pastoral leadership of the Rev. T.A.J. Ogunbiyi as vicar was Isaac Adedeji Cole who later became Adedeji Ishola, founder of a movement which came to be known at one time as The National Church of Africa. Our main interest in him here lies in the fact that he was claimed later by the Ìjọ Òrúnmìlà as one of their "ancestors" or patron saints. In a significant but peculiar way, he belonged to the movement which we have traced from E.M. Lijadu and which we have called religious "Ethiopianism". It was a movement which at different times and on different levels grappled with the reality of Ifá or Òrúnmìlà in the process of the indigenization of Christianity among the Yoruba. But his was a peculiar story in that he represented a series of movements within a movement.

---

41. Souvenir of the Golden Jubilee Celebration, Lagos, 1962, pp. 13-14.

For a long time at Ebute-Ero, I.A. Cole was a committed and outstanding leader, a generous giver and one who devoted his time and energies to the up-building of the church. We meet him, in Ogunbiyi's report of his first full year as a member of the 11-man Parochial Committee.(42) In the matter of additional pews which were then being bought for the church, I.A. Cole was given honourable mention as a distinguished parishioner, zealous and earnest, known for carrying more than his due share of church financial responsibilities.(43) The list of subscriptions on a later page of the report showed him as having contributed the highest sum for both the 1904 Native Pastorate Fund and the 1903 Class Fees; £5.5/- and£1.2/- respectively. In addition, we meet him at other times as Sunday School teacher, president of the Church Choir, Lay Reader, Secretary to the harvest committee, president of the League of Young Worshippers, honorary secretary, and later as the auditor of the parochial committee, people's warden, member of the Nigerian Pastorate Association, and member of the Lagos District Council. The second level at which we meet I.A. Cole is among the intellectual elite of Lagos from about 1912, among whom were C.J. Smart, B.A. (Dunelm) Tutor at the King's College; Victor White, son of a pioneer Minister in Lagos; Rev. S.M. Ābiódún, B.A. (a few years senior to Cole) of the Cathedral, and others. They formed a group, a kind of Literary Society, which organized weekly debates. They met in Tinubu in Remington Store which belonged to one of them, nearly apposite Dr. Sapara's Hospital in Broad Street with Phoenix Lane at the back. They called themselves "Remingtonians" for some time. It was about this time that Cole changed his name to Adeniran Adedeji Ishola.

Dr. Sapara got those people interested in the question of Trinity versus Unity. A sharp debate went on for weeks running, with Ishola returning home to read more from the Bible and other literature.

---

42. CMS Archives G3/A2/O, 1904/154.

43, ibid., p. 8.

He became convinced that there could not be three Gods. He came back excited one night and said to one Sam Aina: "I have got something now: Sapara has opened my eyes". He borrowed theological books from the Rev. S.M. Abiodun. Dr. Sapara himself was not necessarily a convinced Unitarian, but gave out brochures on Unitarianism. Ishola was then taking an American correspondence course in Theology and some form of occultism. Examinations for these courses were invigilated by the Education Department, apparently because some American Baptists would not invigilate them. The Debating Society later shifted its venue to Ilupesi Hall. The debating went on to Church life and its abuses, under the influence of Ishola, Aboaba, Pearse, Sonibi, Denigan and others who had by this time joined the group. Ishola wrote pamphlets and articles on Church life and abuse.

The views being expressed at the debating society and in the writing of its members went against the grain with Church officers, including Ogunbiyi. Ishola was a purist. He came to disagree with Ogunbiyi on different issues, ecclesiatical and moral. This led to an open conflict; and in 1915 Ishola seceded with his sympathizers to form a Brotherhood Church. They started to worship in Ishola's House and a lively Bible Class quickly grew at 48 Obun-Eko Street, Lagos.

Those who joined Ishola were primarily Anglicans from Ebute-Ero and Methodists from Olowogbowo and Tinubu congregations. Dr. Sapara (otherwise known for his pioneering research into herbal medicine and his design of a not too loose Yoruba gown which he constantly wore and which was subsequently called after him) was a Methodist and attended and backed the Bible Class in Ishola's house for some time. Mrs. Ishola flatly refused to secede from Anglicanism to join her husband's group, she being the daughter of a notable Anglican clergyman, the Rev. E.W. George of Abeokuta. Nor did his other relations join him. He claimed divine calling to free Africans from religious bondage and to search for "a religion which is not tainted with Dogmatism,

nor adorned with Ceremonialism".(44)

The doctors, lawyers and other members of the Lagos intellectual elite were with him until about 1918. But this was when the association was more of a debating society in which discussion was not intended to lead on towards eventual religious commitment. When commitment was required, the doctors and lawyers abandoned him and the cause. The movement then became one of the masses in which strong appeal was made to the emotions aided by drumming and the singing of native tunes and appealing to cultural nationalism. At this stage, he was supported by the politicians, chief among whom was Herbert Macaulay, later of the Nigerian Youth Movement. Of course, these also later deserted him especially at the time when Ishola became too much of a self-conscious religious fanatic.

The church which he founded, which now has a congregation in Lagos known as The Unitarian Brotherhood Church, Lagos, had been known by different names at different times as noted hereunder.

The first reference to it was as "The Brotherhood of Man a religious body recently founded by Mr. Adedeji Ishola", in the issue of June 1-8, 1918 of the Lagos Weekly Record. In the issue of Aug. 10 & 17, 1918, we read: "The Brotherhood or The African Unitarian Church - Notwithstanding the secret and open persecution carried on by some unprincipled, bigoted and shameless cleries in our midst against the above body, we are happy to observe that it (the body) continues to flourish from day to day. Religion, we own, is a thing of the heart, and not a rigmarole of creeds and dogmas". The first annual watchnight service of the church was held on Dec. 31, 1918. "The Godhead (I) - A reply to African Unitarian Church doctrine" was an article in the Oct. 11, 1919 issue, page 2, Lagos Weekly Record, written by one who received the doctrine of the A.U.C. by mail from an anonymous source. On January 10, 1920, services at 7a.m. and 6.30p.m. were advertised

---

44. Adeniran Adedeji Ishola, A General Outline of the Brotherhood Religion Lagos, 1914, p. 2.

in the papers by The Brotherhood Christian Church or The African Church, Lagos.

As of July 1926, the name Isholarian Congregation for Universal Brotherhood was used as title on the hymn sheet for Olulana Day 1916 (Founder's Day). The use of this name led to the departure of Dr. Sapara, Messrs. Turton, Arinola Ibaru who was then the Superintendent, and Herbert Macaulay. At this time also, there was a press controversy especially with Mr. O.S. Ọlukòyà- Ọnàbánjọ, then Archdeacon of the Brotherhood Church in Ìjèbu-Ọdẹ, a controversy on the self-centred turn being taken by the movement. This also led to the expulsion of the Archdeacon. Between 1926 and 1935 the names Isholarina Congregation or The National Church of Africa, were used interchangeably. "Isholarian Congregation" was still in use in 1931 in Lagos.

The National Church of Africa was used on the booklet of special hymns for the Harvest Thanksgiving Service "held in Isholarian Temple Lagos" on 30/12/34 at 7 p.m. It was still The National Church of Africa for a Special Service held on 8/2/36 at 5 p.m. for the Dedication of the New Temple at 25a Bankole Street, Lagos with Arinola Ibaru as Superintendent.

The Unitarian Brotherhood Church, Lagos was used on November 8th 1936 in connection with "The New Temple". The order of service in memory of Arinqla Ibaru Alabojuto Ijọ, held on 16/5/37 was similarly headed Unitarian Brotherhood Church, Lagos. Mr. Ibaru died on 5/5/37. Since then that has been the name.

From this series of change of names, we find the complex mixture of Unitarianism, a vision of The Universal Brotherhood of Man, the concept of a National Church of Africa, and the imagination of one who felt himself called not just to be a religious reformer but to be founder of a religion. As for this last, the man's imagination was greatly facilitated by the air of expectancy created by the vision of Henry Venn combined with the zeal of Edward Blyden, Bishop James Johnson, E.M. Lijadu, T.A.J. Ogunbiyi and others. There was the need for

experimentation with keen expectation, and it was easy for unwary ones to consider themselves specially chosen and placed in a unique position. Adedeji Ishola himself wrote: 'In this connection, the following extracts from "Three Sermons on Christian Ministry 1903" by Rev. S.A. Coker, may prove very instructive and illuminating -

> " One of the most influential English Clergymen in England wrote to me some time ago, he says: "I am very much interested in your efforts; If a freer Christian Church than the Church of England with a wider theology freed from Western and European systems of ritual and doctrine (absolutely unsuited as they are to native thought and feeling and tending to destroy instead of animating the ties and interest and development of the African race), if such a church could be set up and spread far and wide, it would be of incalculable service not only to the African people but also to the cause of Christianity among them. In the end it might replace Mohammedanism which our English Christian form is totally incapable of doing. Keep everything native; not English, to live under English rule is good; to organise religion for the African under English form is as bad as the other is Good."(45)

It was such sentiments which charged Ethiopianism. Ishola had no formal theological education. He had Secondary School education at the C.M.S. Grammar School in Lagos, and was employed as a clark in a government office where he was noted as a competent shorthand reporter. From his correspondence courses referred to above, he prided himself in having been awarded some "doctorate" degrees in Divine Metaphysics and in Christian Psychology. One of them was from a certain Metropolitan College in Chicago. It was reported that when he received news of one of these, he commented "I am equal to Bishop Oluwole now. He had to go to Fourah Bay and England for his. I got mine for study at home here"! So, the religious atmosphere of the time coupled

---

45. Adedeji Ishola, Our Doctorines and Objects, Lagos, 1926, pp. 7-8.

with his personal vanity determined the beginnings of the man's claims to pre-eminence. But then he was intimidated by local C.M.S. authorities and persecuted even by government officials. His popularity was enhanced rather than reduced by these. He claimed metaphysical powers of healing and many sick and diseased testified to having found healing from his ministry. For this he was found guilty in court as an unlicensed healer.

Ishola was reputed to be the first to use native lyrics with drumming for church services, which drew crowds into his services. Of course, this noise of drumming and singing became a disturbance to the C.M.S. congregation at Ẹ̀mu-Ọ̀wá. The police had to intervene. Even the lyrics, which he composed for his people to sing to strengthen them in what he considered to be persecution from the more established churches, are so good that they have caught on in Anglican and Methodist churches. Ishola qualifies to rank high in the history of Yoruba hymnology.

His theology is often confusing because it is complex. His use of traditional unitarian phrases and reference books could easily mislead anyone to rank him with the English and American Unitarians. But it is highly significant that he has translated "Unitarian Church" into Yoruba as Ìjọ Ìsọ̀kan Gbọ̀gbo Èdá, the Church of the Unity or Brotherhood of all mankind. This is at variance with the translation used by his pastor at Ijebu-Ode, Ìjọ Ọ̀lọ́run Kan̄, "The Church of One God". Thus, the emphasis in his church has shifted from debate on the unity of the Godhead to the unity of mankind in God. What caught the imagination of the masses in all this, however, was the emphasis in Article 18 published in his Our Doctrines and Objects, viz.

> "The Religion teaches, - (in contradistinction to all Trinitarian and other Unitarian Movements extant), - that it is not in harmony with the will of God that any Nation or Race should be subject to the Religious Dictates of any other Foreign Nation or

Race, and that it is the unchangeable and Everlasting Purpose of God that every Nation or Race must have its own Messiahs in regular succession, for its own people in particular, and for all Mankind in general. This was abundantly confirmed by God in ancient times through Zoroaster the Persian Messiah, through Confucius The Chinese Messiah, through Buddha The Indian Messiah, through Orunmila The African Messiah, through Jesus The Jewish Messiah, through Mohammed the Arabian Messiah &, etc.

It was this teaching which later became the pillar of the Ijo Orunmila which arose afterwards. It was because of this that although Adedoji Ishola had no specific teaching on Ifá or Orunmila, he, together with his drum-major Arinola Ibaru, and others of his followers like Ojelabi, Irokosu and Odutola Odukoya, were acknowledged as patron saints of the Ijo Orunmila.(46)

7. THE ETHIOPIAN COMMUNION AND ITS "IJO ADULAWO" VARIANTS

Those who became disillusioned with Ishola's Brotherhood Church and dissociated themselves from it, such as C.T. Irokosu and Odutola Odukoya, found another movement ready for them to join. It was the Ethiopian National Church, Nigeria, of which Adeniran Oke was the founder, and the story of which must now be told in brief. The year 1920 can be taken as a watershed in the history of new Church movements among the Yoruba. It was the year when Lijadu formally broke links with the CMS in Nigeria. It marked the rise of the Aladura movement following the influence epidemic of 1918-1919. Moreover, the year marked the coming to a head of the discontent against the tardiness of the leaders of the "African Churches" in making the Church truly African in doctrine, ritual and administration.

---

46. See the Ijo Orunmila Adulawo's book of prayers and hymns: Iwé Àdúrà àti Òrìn Mímó tí Ijọ Òrúnmìlà Àdúlawò in Ohùn Òrìn Èdè Ilè Yorùbá. Lagos, 1958, pp. 73-74.

In the preamble to his Short History of the United Native African Church, Pastor G.O. Oke wrote in September 1918: "It is not assumed that the U.N.A. Church at present is free from foreign traits and encumbrances, but the coming generation will, it is hoped, divest it of all foreign elements that are impeding her progress".(47) Immediately following was another sentiment expressing the hope that the Church so founded would ultimately become universally accepted throughout Africa as meeting the aspiration of the cultural nationalism more than the other Churches which were established without this passion for authentic national expression. "The Founders of the Church were the Pioneers of a true African Church which will one day be the National Church in Africa."(48) Again, in June 1919, he wrote: "It is the African hope that one day the African Church shall be the Church in Africa."(49)

However, while G.A. Oke was willing to wait for "the coming generation" to fulfil the ambition of the original founders of the U.N.A. Church, his cousin, Pastor S. Ádeníran Oke felt called of God to assume immediately the leadership of the younger generation. In 1920, he wrote to the different "African Churches" then in Lagos, proposing that they should come together to form a united front for a deliberate and forceful pursuance of the original raison d'etre of the formation of their Church groups. According to Ádeníran Oke, that objective was the establishment of a Church indigenous not only in leadership but also in liturgical formulary.

As it happened, G.A. Oke was by this time honorary secretary to "The African Communion" an association of independent Churches in Lagos to which the correspondence was addressed. The letters of

---

47. G.A. Oke, A Short History of the United Native African Church, Jehovah Shalom Printing Press, Phoenix Lane, Lagos, 1918; para. 5 of the Preamble.

48. ibid.

49. Quoted in J.B. Webster (1964), p. 92.

Adeniran Oke were treated with disdain. In the correspondence, Adeniran Oke signed himself as Pastor of the Native Ethiopian Church. It is not clear to what extent that Church was a conceived plan or an actual reality by the middle of 1920. J.B. Webster dated the start of the Ethiopian National Church as 1921,(50) apparently on the evidence in the booklet "The African Religion" where in the preface written in 1927, the propagation of the ideas represented by the Church was said to have been going on for almost seven years. However, the 1920 correspondence about the Church as quoted in The Ethiopia National Church: A Necessity established 1919 as the correct date of the founding of the Church.(51)

The theological starting-point of Adeniran Oke was the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom was what Jesus came to proclaim and to establish on earth. Acceptance of the ideals of the Kingdom of God was the essential factor in Christianity, not the adoption of any practices which might be seen to belong to a foreign culture or organisation. Adeniran Oke argued on the basis of this that Christianity was not meant to be an exclusive White Man's Religion, and that emphasis on the Kingdom would make clear to everyone the place of the Yoruba or any other tribe in the economy of grace.

It was his pre-occupation with this doctrine and an outspoken exposition of the same which finally brought Adeniran Oke to be seen by the British Government as a dangerous subversive person. He wrote a leaflet in 1932 alleging that he and his followers were facing persecution from both government and Church quaters. His most explosive publication was a booklet which circulated underground for

---

50. op. cit., pp. 93-94.

51. S.A. Oke, The Ethiopian National Church: A Necessity, Lagos 1923, p. 21.

quite a while with the title Does Nigeria Belong to the British? It was published both in English and Yoruba. His father, who later became a member of the Legislative Council and an honoured Member of the British Empire, had earlier publicly disowned him for his allegedly indiscreet statements against the Establishment in both Church and State. The son retaliated by dropping his surname and signing himself afterwards simply as Adeniran. He was arrested by the police in 1935 and put in the assylum where he remained until he died in 1958. In the assylum, he staged a hunger strike on several occasions and refused to receive any gift of money bearing the image of the King or Queen of England. He sent word to his followers to observe a date in October as the Birthday of Redemption. This, apparently, was partly due to his contention that Christ could not have born in December, but also, it has been claimed, because he had a provision that Nigeria would become independent in the month of October.(52) The political emphasis was played down by his followers soon after his arrest. Emphasis was thenceforth on the indigenisation of the Christian religion.

The Ethiopian Church movement finally grew into four distinct sects, each having its own peculiar emphasis. The group which remained faithful to the Adeniran interpretation later established its headquarters in Ilé-Ifé. Of those who remained in Lagos, C.T.I. Irókòsu formed a group with emphasis on the incorporation into Christianity of Yoruba medicine, charms and ancestor-cult. This group did not last very long.

Akin Fagbénró-Beyioku, previously known as H. Antus Williams, a newspaper proprietor and editor, started to develop a theological expression which roughly followed E.M. Lijadu's christology based on

---

52. The nationalistic emphasis which was previously muted was articulated again in the 1950s. On Nigeria attaining independence on October 1st 1960, the Ethiopian National Church requested the government to recognize it as the National Church for Nigeria in acknowledgement of the nationalistic vision of which they had been the expression.

the praise-names of Orunmila. Fagbenro-Beyioku had remained in the United Native African Church but with much sympathy for Adeniran Oke's enthusiasm for immediate indigenisation. He was a candidate for the ministry in the U.N.A. Church when his new christological interpretation became evident. The Church authorities saw this as a heresy and terminated his candidature for the ministry. Soon after, he announced the formation of an Ijo Orunmila. Fagbenro-Beyioku, as the title of one of his books indicated, saw in Orunmilaism, the Basis of Jesuism.

A.O. Osiga would have nothing to do with Jesuism in any form. For him, Orunmila was the prophet of God to the Yoruba. As such, the Ijo Adulawo, became with him The Ijo Orunmila Adulawo. Osiga frequently quoted from the works of Edward Blyden, especially from the text of his lecture delivered in Lagos in 1891 on "The Return of the Exile". A.O. Osiga published a series of pamphlets entitled after Blyden's theme Ipada Wa 'Le Ono Adulawo. Various different sects of Ijo Orunmila started in different places where Yoruba was spoken.

One such was the Eglise des Oracles among the Yoruba and Gun-speaking peoples of Porto Novo in Dahomey. The Ijo Orunmila in its various sects can be pointed to as an illustration of the fact that reversion to traditional religion is one of the risks attending the kind of enterprise started by E.M. Lijadu. With Fagbenro-Beyioku, the result was a syncretism. Only in the case of E.M. Lijadu himself do we have a pure Christology as the result.

IV "ZIONISM" IN THE YORUBA CHURCH.

"One cannot help feeling that in this most vital field, the 6th-century Church was in a much stronger position; and as one searches for reasons one is inevitably led to ask whether the 'dual parentage' of the African Church may not be in some measure responsible for its comparative impotance.

There is nothing in the European background corresponding to the African spirit world. On the contrary, our minds are conditioned by an implicit belief in the possibility of rational scientific explanation of everything that occurs. Thus most of us missionaries have to admit that we face the African spirit world with incomprehension, with disdain and often with anger.

But the African Minister is fully convinced of its reality. Yet he does not know how in Christ's name to deal with it; and often he is afraid of consulting with the missionary about if for fear - fear both of the vengeance of the spirits, and of an uncomprehending rebuff by the missionary. So he leaves it alone, to flourish and to dominate African society, including as often as not, himself".

W. V. Stones, "The Dark Ages and 20th Century Africa", Scottish Journal of Theology, June 1955.

IV. "ZIONISM" IN THE YORUBA CHURCH

Of the two main indigenous movements of response during this 1890-1940 period, we have dealt with the "Ethiopian" movement. We now come to the second. Evidence has been adduced to support the contention that the "Ethiopian" movement was a justifiable reaction against the racial attitudes which the European missionaries represented. We now have to review the evidence to show that the "Zionist" movement was an indigenous adaptation both of the particular type of Christianity which was brought and of the way in which is was brought.

Christianity in its different forms may be grouped along confessional, denominational, intellectual or credal and psychological lines. The confessional forms brought to the Yoruba are not in question (Catholic or "Protestant", including Anglican); the denominational forms are patent ("CMS", Wesleyan Methodist not Primitive Methodist as on the eastern side of the River Niger or Baptist). It is the intellectual or even psychological types of imported Christianity which have not yet been taken into serious consideration. The missionaries, in a fundamental or "depth" way (to use a phrase from Tillich), brought a Folk-Christianity which was only later dressed up as a Culture-Christianity. The critique or evaluation of the Aladura movement which we have so far had, especially in the work of Harold Turner, has been in the context of the Official Christianity taught in the theological Colleges and hardly passing on to the congregation.(1) It is a great credit to these people that it has been possible for Turner to "prove" them to be valid "Churches". But their real significance lies in something else. It lies in their ability to probe deep down, below the facade of oft-repeated dogmatic themes, the claims of racial superiority and the

---

1. cf. esp. H.W. Turner, Op. cit., pp. 314-369, and his Profile Through Preaching, Edinbough House Press, London, 1965, pp. 9-13.

introduction of new rituals and structures, to a discovery of the meaning of the faith for man's existential situation.

1. MISSIONARY FAITH AND ECCENTRICITIES

The nineteenth century which saw the coming of Christianity to the Yoruba was a time of great theological ferment in England.(2) Liberalism in theology and in politics was spreading. Biblical criticism was developing, encouraged by the increase in the use of the historical method, the deductions from archealogical discoveries, the questions which Natural Science raised for biblical assumptions, especially belief in miracles, the impact of philosophy and literature on religion as a whole and on the understanding of other religions.

At least three ecclesiolae in ecclesia emerged in the Church of England, namely the Anglo-Catholic movement, the Evangelical Party and the Broad Churchmen.(3) Within the Evangelical party, there were those who combined with simple piety a redoubtable social conscience (like William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect) or a puritanic approach to work and to the conquest of the environment. There were also those of them who believed only in Bible-thumping and in the characteristic doctrines of plenary inspiration of the Bible, the Atonement interpreted as 'a penal substitutionary sacrifice', and an uncompromising attitude to other religions. It was these latter, on the whole, who brought the Gospel to the Yoruba. Those who had earlier accepted the new-fangled missionary method of "The Bible and the Plough" were soon led to abandon the idea on arrival on the Coast.(4)

---

2. cf. L.E. Elliott-Binns, English Thought: 1860-1900, The Theological Aspect, Longmans, London, 1956, esp. pp. 309f. Also Alec R. Vidler, The Church in an Age of Revolution, 1789 to the present day, Pelican, 1961, pp. 33-133.

3. Alec R. Vidler, The Church in an Age of Revolution, 1789 to the present day, Pelican, 1961, pp. 129f, 157f, 190f.

4. R.W. July, The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its development in West Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Faber and Faber London, 1968, pp. 184f, 282. Also J.B. Schuyler, S.J. "Conceptions of Christianity in the Context of Tropical Africa; Nigerian Reactions to its Advent" in C.G. Baeta, Christianity in Tropical Africa, O.U.P. 1968, pp. 202, 207.

These groupings were found in each of the three protestant denominational societies at work in Nigeriaic the Church Missionary Society (Anglican), the Methodist Missionary Society, and the Southern Baptist Convention which soon joined them from the United States of America.

It may be too much to say that the early missionaries were looking for a retreat from the Liberal Movement in England. However, they certainly found in West Africa as a whole and among the Yoruba in particular a haven from the questioning faith which was then the dominant religious climate in England. They found it to be a place where the people could accept the simple truths of the Gospel with tears of awe and joy in their eyes. Many developments in the Yoruba Church, which ultimately emerged, cannot be properly understood or interpreted without this kind of consideration of the social-theological milieu from which the missionaries came, and, as we have already argued, of the social-religious environment of those themselves to whom the Gospel was brought. It is in this light that we propose that the developments in the Yoruba church during the second fifty years of its history be seen, examined and interpreted. Therefore, before we make an analytical exposition of what we see the Aladura "Zionist" movement as representing, we need to go back to the first half of the century for a documentary examination of the faith and eccentricities of the missionaries themselves. We intend to show that though the missionaries brought an Isin-type of religion, their own reaction under stress and danger was a demonstration of an Oro-approach to life. This was the message which was actually communicated.

(a) Evangelical preaching

We take Thomas Harding, the C.M.S. missionary of Lagos and Ibadan fame, as a representative of the preaching emphasis which deserves to be considered as typical of the presentation of the Christian message to the Yoruba.

There is the account of an extensive tour undertaken by Thomas Harding from 21st November 1899 to 3rd January 1900.(5) From this record, it is evident that Thomas Harding represented in his preaching the literalist exposition of the Biblical drama of Salvation which takes the Genesis Story of the Fall of Man as a historical reality serving as the context and necessity for the death of Christ on the Cross. In this theological position, sin is primary: and the "Work" of Christ is determinative. For many preachers, then and now, this is the central message of the Christian Gospel. Writing of the people with whom he had contact during the tour under reference, Thomas Harding observed: "The people here as everywhere, need the spirit of God to teach them what sin is, and who Christ is, that they may hate the first, and live in and be like the latter".(6)

Every opportunity was taken to expatiate on this double theme of sin and the Saviour Christ. Early in December, 1899 during the same tour, Thomas Harding encountered some difficulties at Ado-Ekiti because he was taken to be a white trader or administrator with some hidden motives covered up under the guise of religious protestations. He found it necessary to differentiate between traders, administrative officers and missionaries, and explained "that the reason why missionaries came to the country was not to interfere in politics, or to buy and sell to get gain, but because they loved (the people's) souls and wanted them to 'know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent' and through Him obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life".(7)

---

5. The Church Missionary Intelligencer, May 1900, pp. 362ff. CMS Archives, 1900/14. In CMS Archives, papers of the Yoruba Mission after the year 1880 are classified under G3/A2/O. Particular items are here referred to by the serial number after the year concerned.

6. Op. cit. p. 364

7. ibid p. 443.

Here, a new element comes into the evaluation of the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the people. They were not merely a delusion, but as involving idolatry which the Bible condemned, they were regarded as sin, and grouped with lying and theft. As such the practice of traditional religion was one of the sins from which Christ came to deliver mankind. On this basis, an appeal could be made to the people to repent from this sin of traditional religious practice and be saved into "the only true religion". Apart from idolatry by itself being regarded as such to be 'sin', the whole complex of life and culture of which idolatry could be taken as the centre and matrix was also generally taken together as sin. For example, Thomas Harding during his 1899-1900 Ekiti tour met a Yoruba king who was a professing Christian and therefore had dissociated himself from idolatry.

The king claimed that he had often tried to dissuade his people to give up idolatry but they would not. Harding commented: "of course his words cannot have much weight, for though he does not personally bow down to idols, yet being the king of a heathen town, he has to give money and permission for some of the sacrifices, and his lustful life is anything but Christlike, and therefore cannot have weight, except against purity and holiness."(8) It must be added, incidentally, that Harding also noted that the man was a "polygamist and covetous". The theme was the same everywhere. The missionary was to tell the people always "something about Jesus, and also that idolatry is sin, as well as lying and theft."(9)

Naturally, the call to repentance and receiving Jesus followed the emphasis on sin. Yet repentance by itself was not enough. Efforts had to be made to persuade the people "of their need of salvation through Jesus Christ."(10) "Salvation (came) through the only Saviour, Jesus the Son of God".(11) What Thomas Harding recorded as the main

---

8. ibid p. 364.
9. ibid p. 365
10. ibid p. 365
11. ibid p. 365

content of his preaching on that tour could very well be taken as a typical presentation of the Gospel to the common people outside the Church: "The point I want to impress upon all to whom I speak on this tour is that Jesus came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."(12) Bishop S.C. Phillips added his own testimony when he wrote of "my favourite theme, Christ the only acceptable and all prevailing sacrifice and the only way of access to God."(13)

Part and parcel of an evangelistic appeal and response from these early days included an act of prayer in which the people were made to join aloud and in unison. The preacher asked the audience in the crowd to close their eyes and make a prayer to Jesus. He would then suggest some phrase of a prayer which the people had to repeat and make personally their own prayer. Harding gave us one such example, "The short prayer which I have taught to thousands in this land..... Jesus Son of God, and Saviour of men, save me, forgive me my sins, and show me the way". And he added a comment in his journal that "the people eagerly repeated this prayer".(14)

As a natural sequence to the emphasis on sin and salvation, there was equally the emphasis on life being a struggle which would be rewarded after death or on the promised return of the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power. Each person had to "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" and await the time when Christ would come first for his own people and then with his own to judge the unbelieving and wicked ones.(15) That the emphasis on present suffering and imminent death was part of the evangelical baggage in that generation could be testified by the number of hymns in Sacred Songs and Solos classified under the different headings of aspiration after

---

12. ibid p. 362
13. Journal of Bishop S.C. Phillip, CMS Archives 1902/126.
14. Intelligencer, May 1900, p. 362.
15. Ibid pp. 367-8

heaven, heaven anticipated, the redeemed in heaven, or death and resurrection. For the new converts, the realities were underlined by the number of sudden deaths among missionaries and the fact that the white missionary visiting a town or village on any one occasion might be dead before he could make another visit. Each parting was thus like a funeral. One such emotional scene was recorded by Thomas Harding when a group of Christians walked part of the way with him to see him off and stopped for an emotional parting ceremony. A funeral hymn on grief and suffering here below contrasted with the absence of partings in heaven was 'sung with tears running down their cheeks'. It was apparently part of what it took to be a Christian, and it must have made the new way of life feel so human. After all, that is what Yoruba traditional religion has been all about.

(b) Pietist demeanour.

Several scholars have contended that the rise of the Aladura movement among the Yoruba must be traced back to and seen as a direct reactionto the influenza which raged in 1918.(16) If this cause-and-effect theory is right, it becomes immediately necessary to examine as far as possible what kind of religious reaction the early missionaries gave to the quick succession in the death of their colleagues or predecessors which gave the name of "White Man's Grave" to the West African mission field. The evidence shows that the situation called from the missionaries exactly the same reactions as we see displayed later on by their converts when sudden death struck in 1918. The calamity led in either case to a resort to prayer, awareness of the irruption of the miraculous usually interpreted as the divine answer to the prayer of his people, faith in the providence of God, an eager waiting for His guidance, and heartfelt praise and thanksgiving for His manifold mercies.

---

16. cf. J.D.Y. Peel, op. cit., p. 62f.

There was an evident lop-sidedness in the preaching emphases of the missionaries, a lopsidedness which they inherited from their being at the same time protestant, evangelical and "pietist". The evangelical emphasis in theology and preaching narrowed down religious experience to the awareness of sinfulness and assurance of salvation from sin through Jesus Christ. The rest of human experience, apart from sin, was generally dismissed as material and worldly and therefore treated with indifference. It was generally held that such an indifference coupled with the preoccupation with sin and salvation was a sign of maturity in religious life and experience. This lopsidedeness resulted in a practical ambivalence between sermon emphasis as distinct from other characteristics shown in practical christian life.

The two primary lines of thought which predominated in preaching have been treated above. The first was this sin and salvation syndrome, the second was an attack against traditional religion. But in real life there was a pietism which clearly was rooted in some other line of emphasis in Christian belief. This factor of pietism needs to be examined at this stage. The theological significance of this sermon-in-life has a contribution to make to our understanding of the type of Christianity handed down to the early Yoruba converts.

The suggestion here is not that the Ālądúrà was simply imitative, or mere copy-cats, neither is it to be taken as if there was no originality at all in the religious movement of which they have become distinctive representatives. It is truer and more fundamental to infer that it was the type of Christianity brought to West Africa by missionaries of the nineteenth century which was disposed naturally to respond in such a way in the presence of a calamity.

Both in Europe-America and in Nigeria it is returning in the form of the charismatic movement. But it is a kind of naturalistic religion which finds expression under Christian forms. A generation which is

claimed to have 'come of age' may either tend to forget that such a type of religion ever existed, or may take the conscious awareness of what is new as an enabling knowledge to make the distinction clear.

A few instances quoted from the journals and correspondence of missionaries will be selected to form a collage of the life of piety which the missionaries lived, preached and taught. We take our first examples from the life and experiences of the Rev. and Mrs. C.A. Gollmer.

Gollmer joined Townsend and Crowther in 1845 when the Yoruba Mission was at its very beginning. For the first ten years of his service among the Yoruba, he laboured in Badagry and Lagos. Subsequently, until 1862 when because of ill-health he had to return to Europe, he was at Abeokuta.

The first illustration is taken from the latter part of 1850 and the early part of 1851 in Badagry, the first missionary station among the Yoruba. The resident missionaries lived under constant physical danger and threats. Symbolic messages consisting of a faggot tied up in a particular way were sent twice to warn them that their house would be set on fire. The house, incidentally, was a wooden bungalow the wood for which was brought with them from England. The novelty of the building gave Gollmer the name by which he was popularly known everywhere in Yorubaland, Alápákó, the owner of wooden boards. This was the house they were warned would be destroyed by fire. To make things worse, Badagry was invaded by the Dahomeyans about that time. There was much fighting and explosion of gun-powder. All this time, Mr. Gollmer was ill and unable to stand or move around. Many of the inhabitants of Badagry ran away for refuge. Gollmer's attitude of mind was recorded thus, "I was at the post where God had placed me, and I must not desert it without plain and special orders. He knows I am here, and I know His arms are not shortened, so in faith I committed myself to our covenant God, and resolved to await the result of this sore trial, and Mrs. Gollmer being of one mind with me greatly strengthened my faith."(17)

From this evidence, Gollmer was a man who in time of suspense, anxiety or agony waited for some "plain and special" divine guidance or instruction. But we are not told how he would obtain or recognize the orders when given. His converts and their children after them would from such an example learn to expect divine guidance, and as we shall discover later on they indeed devised their own means of securing or identifying such guidance.

An obituary note when he died in 1887 recorded him "as having been pre-eminently a man of prayer".(18) This life of prayer stood him in very good stead in the very difficult experiences he had to pass through

---

17. Quoted from C.H. Gollmer's Biography, pp. 50-51.
cf. Miss Tucker (1853), pp. 260-261.

18. C.H. Gollmer, Op. cit. p. 184.

in his missionary labours. At least on one particular occasion, the Missionary Society, in congratulating and commiserating with him on his agonizing experiences, expressed satisfaction that his life of faith would inevitably be an example to the people among whom he worked, "who cannot be insensible of your having forgotten self-preservation for their good, and for the example you have shown them that your confidence in the protecting arm and love of God is a practical one;"(19)

Frequently illnesses dogged his steps and those of his wife. He saw many of his colleagues die. His first wife similarly died, and also one of his own children. One such illness of his wife in 1850, he recorded; "Many times during the last five weeks I have wept over her as over one who is fast drawing nigh her departure, and again and again the Lord was a present help in time of need; but a week ago we all had given up our hopes for her recovery, indeed we expected her dissolution hourly; yet the Lord heard our cries, which we all conjointly made before Him, and raised her up".(20)

His obituary returned to his prayer habits in the following words: "Frequently at night he has been found on his knees, alone with God, pouring out his heart in earnest supplication and intercession. At family prayer he never forgot, we are told, to mention each of those belonging to him by name:..."(21)

With experiences of illnesses and frequent deaths was also the agony of intermittent wars and rumours of wars, especially during his days in Lagos, for that was the time of the conflict between two rival kings of Lagos, Akintoye and Kosoko, the latter being in favour of continuing with the slave-trade and therefore having the support of quite a number of merchants.(22) Often, the little house of the Gollmers

---

19. Op. cit. pp. 53, and 83
20. ibid p. 45
21. ibid p. 184
22. ibid p. 82

was crowded with refugees seeking from him the protection which he knew he was by himself unable to give and which at different times challenged him to spurn his own self-protection. On occasions like these, he had no other option but to commit them and himself in prayer to the almighty care and protection of God, and to call others in England to "remember us before the throne of grace".(23) One illustration must be quoted: "As early as five o'clock this morning, whilst thunder fearfully rolled to and fro, lightning almost changed night into day, and rain poured down in torrents, from four hundred to five hundred people, mostly women and children, with loads and animals, fled to our premises for safety and the fight was to commence this morning. How we felt can be better imagined than described. However, after the first shock of alarm was past, we committed ourselves, with our house and the many people in prayer to our faithful covenant God, the sure Rock, where our anchor was safely cast in tempests past, and behold, He heard and helped."(24)

His journals in 1854 many times carried reports similar to the entry for "December 18th, Lord's Day; Much rumour of war.... After the usual morning prayers, instead of a sermon, I and my native agents with the whole congregation humbled ourselves before God, and supplicated mercy at His throne for ouselves and the people gone out to war".(25) It was about this time that Gollner started a mid-week prayer meeting every Thursday evening to commit the life of the people afresh to God, and for general intercessions. In addition to these, more special prayer meetings were called for on emergency occasions. Lightning struck one of their houses one night. On the day following, according to his journal, "about 10 a.m., I called together all our people on the premises and held a prayer meeting, humbling ourselves Before God, and offering praises for His deliverance."(26)

---

23. ibid p. 82
24. ibid pp. 75, 78f.
25. ibid pp. 85-6, 103-4, 166.
26. ibid p. 86

In 1862, the Dahomeyans launched one of their frequent military raids against Abeokuta. By that time the Egba in Abeokuta had, through the intervention of Samuel Crowther, accepted the conditional protectorate of the British. The danger of the Dahomeyan invasion was so real that the British governor in Lagos, Captain Glover, advised all missionaries to quit Abeokuta. They did not follow the advice. They stayed on, called the local Christians to prayer, wrote to their supporters in England to pray for their protection. Then a miracle happened. A plague broke out in the Dahomeyan army, killed many of them and forced the others to return before they had time to invade Abeokuta. The people claimed it as divine intervention prompted by the prayers of the Christians. The power of prayer was in everybody's mouth. The parallel to the biblical story of Hezekiah's prayer and the army of Sennacherib (Isaiah 36-37) was too evident to miss, and for long afterwards many a sermon was laden with the story of this miraculous power of prayer.(27)

(c) Eccentric Zeal

The next illustration for this section is a sadder story of the missionary devotion and enterprise of two itinerant preachers. The point we want to make with it is that the method of work of the missionaries concerned found itself repeated by many an Aládúra preacher or prophet several decades afterwards.

The Rev. J.C. Muller landed at Badagry in January 1848 with his wife. One month after their landing, "Mrs. Muller was carried off by fever, leaving her husband alone, yet not alone; cast down but not forsaken".(28) His determination to further the work 'while it was yet day' was quickened in him. He set off immediately for Abeokuta where a few months afterwards he had to take charge of the work in the Ake area while Mr. Townsend left in May for England. "His delight was to tread in the steps of his Divine Master, and g from town to

---

27. A.K. Ajisafe, Op. cit. pp. 118-119, cf. 9. 99. Miss Tucker, Op. cit. pp. 214-219.

28. Miss Tucker Op. cit. p. 139

preaching;..... he would set out early in the morning, and returning home in the middle of the day for rest and refreshment, would again take up his favourite employment, and walk and teach again till evening". It was recorded that "the spirit of this man of God fled at day-break of June 16, 1859", just two years and a half after he arrived in the country.(29)

Mr. Van Cooten worked in the same way as Mr. Muller. He arrived at Badagry in March 1850. His wife died in May following. Writing soon after the death of his wife, he avowed, "I am now alone..... I have afresh dedicated myself and all I have to this work. Africa is henceforth my only home on earth; and I desire not to dwell in houses; but to be a stranger and a pilgrim from day to day. I have one great object at heart - the salvation of the sons of Ham."(30) He became a homeless itinerant preacher. He died on the 13th March 1851, "full of thanksgiving to God for having permitted him during the few months of his sojourn in Africa to make His name known to thousands".

This wandering preaching method apart, by now the point is clearly made that waiting and looking for divine guidance, resorting to prayer in cases of ill-health, praying for a miracle to happen, praying together aloud in unison, expecting results from praying from a great distance were all part of the pattern in which the Yoruba Church was brought up. There were elements of these which are also to be found in the Ifá cult. They grew more out of the Òrò-concept of religion, rather than from the Ìsìn-concept.

2. FREEDOM, AUTHORITY AND INDEPENDENCY

Much emphasis has been laid by a number of scholars on the suggestion that the motivation of the so-called African Independent Churches to separate existence was the desire to assert their independence of the foreign churches in terms of organisation and administration

---

29. ibid p. 140
30. ibid pp. 266-7

and church leadership.(31) Yet, in so far as the movement is churchly, it should be regarded as natural to expect independency to be expressed in matters of religious belief.

(a) Dogma and Colonial Mentality

On ivestigation, we have discbvered that the colonial setting within which the church grew also gave a colonial mentality to Christians even in the interpretation of the Christian Faith. For one thing, this colonial mentality, strengthened as it was by the idea of "The White Man's Burden", provided the climate for the inclination of early missionaries in Yorubaland to snub local beliefs and treat them as a delusion. This has made indigenization psychologically difficult. Outside the church, Emil Ludwig, a civil administrator, has asked, "How can the untutored African know God?"(32) The question has not been asked so openly in the life of the Church. But the assumption has been very strong. "How can the untutored African with only fifty years or so of Christian history know about the Christian faith which has been spoken and thought about and practised for nearly two thousand years?" The danger of syncretism was added in the African situation to the fear of heresy. The result has been very inhibiting.

Yoruba people were not previously subjected to any restriction in limits and range of religious belief prior to the advent of Christianity.(33) For one thing, traditional religion lays more emphasis on ritual and religious practices than on religious beliefs, though this is not to be taken in the sense that there were no beliefs or that the people were not aware of what they believed. Rather, because of the absence of theological dogmatism in traditional religion, there could be no "authorized version" of any particular doctrine.

Since W. Robertson Smith made his comment on the relative stress on rites and belief,(34), the impression which was not intended by

---

31. Bengt Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa, revised edition, O.U.P., 1961, David Barret, Schism and Renewal in Africa, OUP., 1968.

32. E.G. Parrinder, 1954, p. 9.

33. J.D.Y. Peel, Op. cit. p. 53.

34. W. Robertson Smith, Op. cit. pp. 16, 28ff.

Robertson Smith has wrongly been created, that traditional religion has no foundation in belief and that the priests did not insist on knowledge and belief. The evidence in Yoruba religion proves the contrary. The myths onshrine the doctrine. And at every consultation of the Ifá oracle, the myth is related as may be found appropriate according to the particular Ódu 'house' in the Ifa tradition which turns up. The myth so recounted is made the basis and imperative for both faith and ritual. What was absent was theological dogmatism, except in the case of "The-King-did-not-hang-himself" dogma promoted for a while in Oyo.

What we did not have, but which came with the practice of Christianity as brought into the country at the material time, was the enforcement of belief on the authority of a church council. The controversy in England leading to the establishment of the Church of England on the one hand, and the rise of the "Free Churches" on the other immediately prior to the formation of the missionary societies which brought the faith to Africa, surely influenced and determined the situation.

On the contrary, even the New Testament knows no enforcement of dogma on legal authority although the moral and theological persuasion of the faith was not absent. The existence of four different Gospels and the inclusion not only of these but also of Pauline, Petrine and Apocalyptic views side by side in the same canon of the New Testament records for all time the tolerance of the Early Church in accommodating varying doctrines of the same Event of God in human flesh "for us men and for our salvation". Apostolicity as a test of orthodoxy in the early Church really meant acceptance of the facts of Christ. Moreover, it was in a missionary situation that St. Paul expounded for the newly converted the freedom which is found in new life in Christ. But the problem confronted and faced by the bishops who followed in later years was that of preserving the traditions of the gospel as handed on to them

against the dangers of heretical interpretations. The Acts of Uniformity in England did not make the situation easier to handle in any other way than that of dogmatism and enforcement.(35) Strangely still, English Nonconformists later reacted to require from their followers strict adherence to their doctrines. For this reason, the freedom in Christ which is part of the Gospel was denied to Christians in the missionary situation of Africa.

Freedom in the Spirit in the missionary situation of Yorubaland should have meant the freedom to identify and emphasise such biblical truths as could be seen to be relevant to their situation, and speaking creatively to their culture towards their personal and social redemption. It presupposes acceptance and acknowledgement of the truth that though there is a unity of the Gospel of Christ, yet different facets of it speak more directly to different personal, social and cultural situations and similarly evoke diversities of gifts for ministeering in diverse situations.

(b) Response of the "African Churches" and Aladura Contrasted.

Thus, there has been a persistent resistance to innovation, independent thinking and therefore to originality. Yoruba Christians have been always ready to ask, "How would the authorities of the Church like to see this question answered? or What is the orthodox answer to the question now before us?" And by orthodox is generally meant what is permissible to be believed in the light of what has been laid down to be believed. The idea of honesty in religious thinking which has been raised by the title of the book by Bishop J.W.T. Robinson and by John Oman before him is what we need to investigate in the Yoruba context now.

When the African Church Inc. seceded in stages from 1907 to 1917, there was no urge to alter or reinterpret doctrine. Nwon fun ẹ l'ohe, ọ nta ọni sī ī; ọ gbọ́n t'ẹni tọ sọ ẹ? was the constantly echoed aphorism

---

35. F.L. Cross (ed.), The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, O.U.P., 1958 see Uniformity, Acts of; see also Uniformity, Acts of, Amendment Act (1872).

which determined the predominant attitude towards doctrines. "He who is given some stew and who goes to thin it down with water is claiming to be wiser than he who made the stew". The main issue at stake then was native leadership. Their theological awareness was not strong enough for them to stand out in opposition or in contrast to the accepted doctrinal formulations of the Church from which they went out. They felt that the task placed upon them by the fact of secession was to prove that they adhered to and intended to continue to adhere to the doctrines and liturgical formularies they were taught by their mentors in the Church of England.

J.K. Coker, one of their chief spokesmen, wrote in his letter to the Lagos Standard of December 4, 1901: "We have since withdrawn, much against our desire, and are having our services in a private house on the same lines as our parent the CMS taught us" (underlining mine). The intention of their undertaking was simple "to establish a strong native African Church to be supervised solely by Africans".(36)

With the coming of the Aladura movement from 1918, the situation started to be different. Even yet, on the whole the freedom in the exploration of the faith was not for a long time used in a critical sense to question the validity of what was imparted by the early missionaries and accepted inviolate by their converts with their descendants and successors. All the Aladura did was to claim the freedom of the Spirit of God Himself to discern what speaks to their real situation. They did not at first claim to reject any truth previously imparted. They only laid hold of the truth which could create life anew and heal. They did not and do not even reject anyone. It is they who have been rejected by those in the longer-established churches.

Originality is demanded of an Aladura Prophet by the members. Otherwise he loses his claim to prophetic inspiration and commission.

---

36. See also CMS G3/A2/O/1902/60, J.K. Coker to CMS General Secretary, dated 24/2/1902.

This has not been demanded of an Anglican, Methodist or Baptist pastor. One needs only to compare the religious literary output of the African Independent and longer-established churches in Nigeria to be convinced of the liberating effect that Independency has had on the African Independent Churches and the state of spiritual illiteracy and enslavement in the historic churches.(37)

Popular missionary presentations of the Àlàdúrà movement give the impression that this religious movement is an invitation to anarchy. Seen, however, from the angle of the participants in the movement, revolt against the dogmatic authority of the Church has been the only viable way to Christian dynamism and creativity. Especially was this so in view of the increasing parade of the assumption that Christianity was more or less identifiable with Western culture.

(c) The Significance of the Yoruba Bible

We have discussed the main emphases in the message of preachers, both missionary and native. There is a third "preacher", viz. the Bible itself translated into the Yoruba language and made available cheaply to the individual Christian.(38) With the translation of the Bible into Yoruba, and the growth of literacy, the contents of the Bible became directly available to the individual enquirer. As a result, what the Yoruba received of the Christian message was derived not only nor even primarily from the sermon but also directly from the Bible.

Freedom and Authority have to be examined in relation particularly to Bible Interpretation. What the Àlàdúrà have claimed is not absolute freedom. It is freedom to open the Bible with faith and allow it to speak from faith to faith, with dogma being only a guide

---

37. cf. Bibliography of Yoruba Àlàdúrà Church in Peel Op. cit, pp. 316f compared with the Literature Surveys in 1948 and 1962 by John Hargreaves and John Stephens respectively under the auspices of the Christian Council of Nigeria.

38. David Barrett has called attention to this role of the Bible in op. cit. pp. 127-129.

and not a law imposed from outside. The Independent Churches took the Bible as a heritage of which no one should deprive them. This surely has produced the Bible-thumping attitude of members and prophets of these churches. But in so far as their theological reflection has been based on the Bible it has been of great benefit to them.

The fact that the Bible and liturgical materials were translated into the language of the people for their religious use, that a deposit of knowledge was being passed on and consciously being received, and that the people accepted and believed that what was brought to them was completely new and had no paralled at all in native religious traditions made for complete docility. The early effort was to learn and adopt terms and their definitions as they were taught. Inevitably, names like Lord, Saviour, Son of Man, Son of God, Messiah were quickly accepted and associated with Jesus.

By 1900, SPCK had devised a questionnaire related to a procedure for the translation into, and the publishing of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer in, foreign languages. One section of the questionnaire dealt with the rendering of important words or phrases. The intention of the section was to clarify what precedents, if any, were to be followed, whether by transliteration or otherwise. It was recommended that such words "for which few languages offer exact renderings" should be transliterated from the original Greek, unless some satisfactory reason for adopting another course could be adduced." The ruling, it was announced, had the backing of His Grace The Archbishop of Canterbury.(39)

---

39. We note that the words and pharases there listed for transliteration were: God, Lord, Spirit, Person,, Trinity, Of the substance Sacrament, Body of Christ, The Word, Regenerate, Church, Catholic, Bishop, Priest, Deacon, Minister (cf. Alufa, Alkassis) Confession, Absolution (CMS Archives 1900/17): As it happened, most of these were translated, not transliterated, into Yoruba, According to Bishop Oluwole who was Chairman of a Committee for the translation of the Book of Common Prayer into Yoruba, the words "Catholic, Martyr, Bishop, Deacon, Sacrament were all transliterated." (CMS Archives, 1900/71).

The point at issue with the Aládúrà Churches is not so much interpretation as selection and emphasis. Their existence answers the question as to what parts of the Bible speak more directly to Christians in the Yoruba situation, and what emphases in Christian Theology were more potent in speaking to the heart of the Yoruba in the early parts of the twentieth century. The Aladura have intuitively gone beyong all cultural accretions to discover that the only truth which needs to be acknowledged as valid for all is the name of Jesus interpreted according to the scriptures.(40)

The revolt against dogma which was experienced in Europe in the 18th century in the name of Rationalism is now being experienced in Africa for an entirely different reason. This time there is a theological conviction that God speaks through others outside the acknowledged authorities of the Church; that knowledge of God comes not only through the established hierarchies of the Church, viz, priests, bishops, church councils; that God reveals Himself and His will sometimes through visions vouchsafed to the faithful or through dreams which come involuntarily to all.

Lectionaries may determine what Bible passages are read or expounded by they do not determine the exegetical content. When the people started to read the Bible itself in their own language, they discovered with amazement that the Bible spoke of other things beyond sin or after-life, and that it said much more which was relevant to man. They discovered, as the Rev. Arthur Southon was to note later, that the world of dreams, visions and possession in the Old Testament, of miracles and angels in the Synoptic Gospels, and of the principalities and powers of which St. Paul spoke, was similar to theirs. They discovered that the psalmists were bothered with the 'adversary' as they were. In addition, they discovered growing in themselves the

---

40. H.W. Turner, 1965, pp. 24ff. 1968, pp. 328f-332.

faith of which St. Paul spoke but which could be applied to all realms of human existence.

3. NEW-BREED MISSIONARIES: TOO LATE, TOO LITTLE

A new generation of missionaries came later on and took up the theme of the expression of the Christian faith in African thought-forms. Most of the prominent names were Methodists, the Anglicans who had this conviction having had a setback from the post-Venn persecution of Bishop Crowther with the attendant consequences to the Church. Of those who deserve to be mentioned, S.S. Farrow was the only Anglican. The others, W.T. Balmer in Ghana, E.W. Smith in Rhodesia, Arthur E. Southon and E.G. Nightingale in Nigeria, being Methodists and therefore averse to rituals in Christian worship, concentrated their interests and efforts towards Africanization on doctrinal lines. Smith's writings were very influential and often quoted in Yoruba "Ethiopian" circles. We shall deal with Farrow and Balmer.

(a) S.S. Farrow

S.S. Farrow was a C.M.S. Missionary.[41] He arrived in Nigeria in 1889 and started his ministry in Lagos where he was priested on 12th January, 1890. Towards the end of the year, his fiance joined him from England and they were married in Lagos on the 9th of December of the same year. He was appointed Acting Principal of the Training Institution in Lagos and undertook a considerable amount of pastoral work in connection with Christ Church, Lagos. In a letter dated 27th February, 1892, he proposed that the Training Institution should be moved into the interior and that the curriculum should be reorganised towards the end of training men for pastoral and evangelistic work relevant to the life of the country. The Institution moved

---

41. The scant biographical data in the cited work of Farrow (pp. 6f) have been supplemented with scattered materials in CMS archives on his missionary service. See G3/A2/0 for the years concerned.

into Òyó and was renamed St. Andrew's College. But he himself was not to go to Òyó. He was stationed rather in Abeokuta where he spent some three years, paying occasional visits to Ibadan and other Yoruba towns. It was during this period that he started to make his investigation which later earned him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh in 1924, and the result of which was published under the title Faith, Fancies and Fetish, or Yoruba Paganism.(42) He had looked forward to a long spell of service to the Yoruba people. But it was cut short when he was compelled to return to England in 1894 for reasons of health.

Farrow's missionary methods were much in advance of those of his contemporaries, not to speak of his predecessors. He gave us an insight into his own methods when he wrote: "The modern Christian missionary does not begin work by methods calculated to antagonise. He does not say, 'Your religion is all wrong! I come to set you right'. His first aim is to win the confidence of the people, and when he begins to teach, he lays hold of the elements of truth in their present belief, which are common to them and him, and so develops those elements that he can lead up to the revelation of God as a God of love in the mission of Jesus Christ".(43)

(b) W.T. Balmer

W.T. Balmer (1866-1928) did not actually serve in Nigeria. Yet he deserves a place in our present consideration because of the wide influence of the Catechism of Christian Experience which he wrote and which was used widely all over the Methodist Districts in West Africa.(44) Balmer was ordained as a Methodist Minister in 1889 and was appointed for service to the Sierra Leone District in 1901.

---

42. Op. cit. pp. 6f

43. Op. cit. p. 147

44. Minutes of the Literature Committee, 1922 and onwards, in the archives of the Methodist Missionary Society, London.

There he started an educational ministry which took him fron Richmond College, Freetown, to the Mfantsipim High School in the then Gold Coast, and back to Sierra Leone on the staff of Fourah Bay College, where he ultimately became Vice-Principal. It might be noted that it was at his initial suggestion that Fourah Bay became a joint Anglican-Methodist institution. In a memorandum dated 8th June 1901, he proposed to the Methodist Missionary Society that Richmond College, Freetown, be closed down and amalgamated with Fourah Bay to become a stronger institution of higher learning. It was at this juncture that he was himself moved in 1909 to Mfantsipim, but after a short spell in England he was sent back to Sierra Leone in 1914 for a seven-year span during which time he made his personal contribution to the growth of Fourah Bay College.

By the end of 1920, it became clear that his health would not permit a longer stay in West Africa. So he returned to England. In 1922, he became the first Wesleyan missionary to be set apart specially for the production of literature for Christian work in West Africa. A Wesleyan Missionary Society West African Literature Committee was set up. It had its first meeting on the 21st November 1922, with the Rev. E.I. Thompson in the chair, W.T. Balmer as Secretary and a membership which included among others the Revs. A.E. Southon, F.D. Walker the historian who later wrote A Hundred Years in Nigeria to commemorate the Centenary of Methodist work in Nigeria, and Miss Entwistle.

Before that meeting, Balmer had already prepared the manuscript of his A Catechism of Christian Experience: a simple book of religious instruction for Catechumens for use in West Africa.(45) The significance of this Catechism stems from the fact that it took

---

45. W.T. Balmer, A Catechism of Christian Experience, Atlantis Press London, 1924, with many reprints afterwards. See Minutes of the Literature Committee in MMS Archives.

seriously the converts' "experience" of life. The very first question in the Catechism is "What do children do when in trouble"? Question 4 asks "Are grown-up people ever in trouble"? This standpoint of concern about people in trouble is in line with the preoccupation in traditional religion, and particularly in the Ifa religious system. Part of the brief introduction to the Catechism is worth quoting. It is said to have

> "been written in relation mainly to three aspects of that life which constitute matter of real experience for every African. These are:
>
> (a) early initiation into pain, fear and sorrow.
>
> (b) a vague searching after God in animism and fetishism.
>
> (c) need of knowledge that true life is fellowship,
>
> Peace of Mind; Trust, Fellowship are the concrete forms in which the Pauline trio of virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity, should be presented to the African mind, and herein is an attempt to do it."

The attempt was bravely made by W.T. Balmer. The Church context in which the book was to be used, however, contradicted the approach. It was the Aladura and other "Zionists" who brought it into realization for the Yoruba Church.

By the end of 1923, the Committee gave approval for the publication of the Catechism; and at the end of 1926, it was reported that the Catechism had been put into Mende, Yoruba, Àlàdá, Adjukru and French. The Yoruba translation was used for a long time in schools and catechumenate classes. The meeting which received this report also gave approval for the publication of Balmer's manuscript on "Christian Marriage", another welcome book. An earlier publication was a paraphrase of Galatians with a pungent introduction. This manuscript was such a fine introduction to the essence of the Christian Faith

that when it was published in 1924, it had to be done in two bindings, one for sale in England and the cheaper for sale in West Africa.

His obituary in the records of the Wesleyan Missionary Society and of the Literature Committee for which he worked noted him as "sensitive, reserved and quiet". It was also testified that "his little manuals and books sprang out of his own intimate understanding of the African mind. They have been translated into several African languages and distributed by tens of thousands". The obituary was inscribed "with gratitude to God for the five years service of so gifted a scholar and missionary".

(c) Too little, too late

The influence of the new missionary approach did not achieve much because the main issues had not yet been touched. The fundamental problem of freedom and authority in the Church had not been faced squarely in application to theological reflection and spiritual self-expression.

Writing special catechisms and theological textbooks for 'Africans' might in itself be a paternalistic perpetuation of colonial racist appresion. Nevertheless, to write A Catechism of Christian Exprerience could have been an ideal starting-point if only the task had been understood for what it was. What the missionaries did not recognize fully was the need for easing and guiding the transition between the Òrò-concept of religion which the people first knew and the Ìsìn-concept which later was brought to them. Indeed, to begin a catechism with the question, "What do children do when they are in trouble?", as Balmer did, could provide a greater link with the dilemmas of life than "Who is God?" with which other catechisms began.(46)

46. Most ancient catechisms and creeds began with the metaphysical question about the nature of God. John Calvin's Catechism of the Church of Geneva opened with a question about 'the chief end of man' only as an immediate introduction to the issue of man's knowledge of God (see Calvin's Theological Treatises, Library of Christian Classics SCM Press, London, 1954, pp.91f.). Some later catechisms started from questions about church membership. For example, "What is your name? Who gave you this name?" (The Book of Common Prayer), or "What is a Christian"? (The Senior Catechism of the Methodist Church, London, 1952). W.T. Balmer's is the only catechism we know which started deliberately with the human situation.

In the next chapter, we will first examine the Yoruba theological efforts along the line of the "Who is God"? approach before we give attention to the Àládúrà and others who braved the way of the alternative approach.

V. ATTEMPTED CHRISTOLOGIES ON IFÁ PREMISES.

"First, a Christology that does not express the belief in Christ of a particular time will obscure the significance of Jesus rather than clarify it. Secondly, no Christology has ever wholly captured the secret of the essential nature of Jesus Christ, so that there is none to which absolute authority may be ascribed. Thirdly, only in faith can we understand who he is, in the same direct way in which the first disciples understood who he was and what he wanted when he suddenly appeared beside their fishingboats by the Sea of Galilee".

C. J. Bleeker, Christ in Modern Athens, pp. 28f..

"Christology began as the response of the first Christians to the history of Jesus. In other words, it was in the post-Easter Church that, in Bultmann's phrase, the Proclaimer became the Proclaimed. Nevertheless,...there is a Christology implicit in Jesus' own teaching. As Reginald H. Fuller puts it, Jesus understood his mission in terms of eschatological prophecy. As eschatological prophet, he was not merely announcing the future coming of salvation and judgement, but actually initiating it in his words and deeds. His proclammation and activity confronted men with the presence and saving act of God breaking into history. What the post-Easter Church did was to interpret this in terms of an explicit Christology. Certainly, after Easter the Christian message or kerygma coincides with the meaning embodied in Jesus as a person."

Charles Davis, Christ and the World's Religions, Hodder and Stoughton, 1970, p. 125.

V. ATTEMPTED CHRISTOLOGIES ON ĪFÁ PREMISES

The prodigious theological activities of the Yoruba Ethiopian Christians during the second fifty years of Christianity in Nigeria has so far been neglected by scholars. In this chapter, we shall trace the theological orientation of some leaders of the movement, beginning with Samuel Crowther himself, but paying special attention to E.M. Lijadu, the most versatile of them all.

Christology was their main concentration, seeking parallels between the Òrúnmìlà of Ifa and Jesus Christ of Christianity, identifying Christ as the one who was presaged in the Ifa system and as the fulfiller of the hopes and yearnings for salvation in Ifa traditions.

1. THE CHRISTOLOGY OF BISHOP CROWTHER

When Samuel Crowther had served in Southern Nigeria as a Native Missionary for almost sixty years, he was persuaded to put some of his evangelistic methods and experience into writing. This he was very hesitant to do. The diffidence he felt in undertaking the task might have issued from a sense of frustration brought about both by the campaign of hate and calumny mounted against him by some missionaries towards the end of his ministry, and also by the feeling that he had had only a limited success even in the very task of converting his fellow-countrymen and bringing them to Christ. He had previously done much speaking to persuade his hearers to support missionary work. Towards the same end, he had kept many journals, especially on the expeditions into the interior which he had undertaken with teams sponsored by the British Government and the support of the Church Missionary Society by which he was brought up.
He had by now compiled a dictionary of the Yoruba language and had also helped with a vocabulary list of Igbo. He had translated the Bible into Yoruba. Yet, he felt a diffidence in putting down on paper

his experience with the men of other religions whom he encountered in his ministry and to whom he had sought to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, he did a short booklet of about sixty pages which he addressed not only to missionary enthusiasts of his day but also with the hope that it might be a help to "young inexperienced Christian Native-Teachers who may have to do with shrewd aged Mohammedan and heathen countrymen already armed with strong prejudices against Christianity and inclined to despise the inexperienced young teacher".(2)

Crowther had become aware of the difficulty and embarrassment of an inexperienced young Christian teacher facing day after day groups of wise, experienced and knowledgeable elders of the community versed in the lores of the land and the traditional religious answers to the problems which life raises. From practical personal experience, Samuel Crowther himself had come to see the inadequacy of the preparation given in the missionary training school for Christian encounter with other religions.

In his days as a school-teacher among the freed Yoruba slaves in Freetown, Crowther saw a school boy in his class wearing a protective charm given to him by his Muslim father.(3) Crowther cut it off and removed it from the boy's neck but took care to give it back to the boy to take home to his father with the warning that they would not countenance such a superstitious practice in a Christian School.(4) The father came in a rage to see Crowther at home; and the latter took the opportunity to arrange a meeting with Muslim leaders for debate and discussion on doctrinal differences between Christians and Muslims. The argument followed the usual line of disputing the

---

(2) It was a posthumous publication: Samuel Adjai Crowther, Experiences with Heathens and Mohammedans in West Africa, S.P.C.K., London, 1892. pp. 1-2.

(3) Op. cit. p. 7

(4) cf. p. 24: "An old Mohammedan priest had asked for a copy of an Arabic Bible for a long time, but it was not given him from fear that he would make a bad use of it, in making charms from it as they did from the Koran. However, after many years urgent request with faithful promise ..... a copy was given him ..... not to be otherwise used than for instruction".

importance of calling Jesus the Son of God. This is significant, and illustrates the fundamental failure of missionary methods to perceive the relevance of cosmological issues in the practi theological problems which arose from the contact of Christianity and Yoruba traditional religion. The charm round the neck of that boy was worn for protection, possibly because the child was believed to be an abiku by his parents. Those parents must have suffered the sorrow of infant mortality a number of times prior to the birth of that child. Jesus as the Son of God was not the point at issue. The more reasonable help to offer such parents would perhaps have been a medical prescription. If an argument was felt desirable, it could have been a science-versus-magic discussion. Of course, the theological question which was raised later by the Aladura may have been raised from this: In what sense could we see Jesus as Lord over all things? Here we see an indication of how ultimately "In the name of Jesus ..." became a neomagical formula among Yoruba Christians not only of the Aladura persuasion but also in the general membership of the historic Churches.

Bishop Crowther's evangelistic method in approaching heathens was first to show them from the words of Holy Scripture the futility of idol-worship, using for support such biblical texts as Isaiah 44: 8-20; Psalm 115: 4-8; Daniel 3: 1-30.(5)

It needs to be noted that the Bible was the basic source of theological evidence for Crowther. He proposed the publication of selected texts on different theological themes for the use of young inexperienced teachers; and he made a selection of such relevant texts in reference particularly to Christology. His evangelistic method is stated simply in his own words: "Let the word of God speak for

---

(5). Op. cit. pp. 15-16.

itself",(6) "The questions asked were answered direct from the Word of God".(7) From page 13 to page 60 at the end of the book, we have nothing but his plea for the use of the Bible directly in preaching and teaching, and his plea to missionary and Bible Societies to make the Bible and other literature based on it available to the young inexperienced teachers as well as to the new converts. What he referred to as the "adjusted handbook" of quotations from the Bible is, from all the evidence, what the Scripture Gift Mission or even the British and Foreign Bible Society produces today, selected Bible passages on specific theological themes.

The Christological issues considered by Bishop Crowther as demanding priority for consideration in the African situation, especially of course with relation to the presence of Muslims are the following:-

The Sonship of Christ. i.e. Jesus as the Son of God;

Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life;

Christ as the Coming Judge (at the end of time);

and all these are related to the Fatherhood of God, God's Plan for Man's Salvation and the Great Commission.(8)

Bible passages are collected seriatim indicating the different occasions when Jesus was referred to as the Son of God, beginning from the prediction by the prophets,(9) the announcement by the Angel Gabriel,(10) the declaration by the Spirit from heaven particularly at His Baptism and the Transfiguration,(11) declaration by Christ Himself,(12) His declarations after His Resurrection,(13) the confession of Him as Son of God by others out of their own conviction,(14)

---

(6) Op. cit. p. 14
(7) Ibid. p. 21
(8) Ibid. pp. 32f., 18.
(9) Ibid. pp. 33-4.
(10) Ibid. pp. 34-6.
(11) Ibid. pp. 36-37.
(12) Ibid. pp. 37-43.
(13) Ibid. pp. 43-44.
(14) Ibid. pp. 44-46.

testimonies from the teaching of the Apostles,(15) expression of Christ's Sonship from Satan's insinuation,(16) the Trial before the Crucifixion and the taunting of Him on the Cross which were based on this issue of his being the Son of God.(17)

What we have here, therefore, is the use of proof texts par excellence. It is clear also that Crowther was a traditionalist in his theology. As the first African bishop consecrated for CMS work on the African continent, it was clear that his first duty was to preserve the faith "as delivered by the saints".

3. THE CHRISTOLOGY OF E.M. LIJADU

Some detailed attention has to be paid at this point to the theology of E.M. Lijadu. He was the only one in his generation, from among both European and Nigerian preachers in Yorubaland at the time, who devoted himself to writing a Christology. His work is of special importance because he deliberately set out to write his Christology against the background of traditional Yoruba religion and the people's concepts of God. This is what he did in his small book Orumla (sic) published in 1908.

When James Johnson in his address to the Pan-Anglican Congress in London in that year remarked after a study of Yoruba, Igbo and Edo cultures that the Christian doctrines of Atonement, the mediatorial work of Christ and the Incarnation "are to be found embedded in their religious system", his words fell on deaf ears. People were not expecting to hear it, and it amounted to one of the missionary over-statements of the day not to be taken too seriously. In fact, as he was saying it, the manuscript of Òrúnmìlà by his fellow Nigerian attending the Congress was already in the hands of the printers not many miles away in Exeter. Of course, it is possible that the general

---

(15). Ibid. pp. 46-52
(16). Ibid. pp. 53-57
(17). Ibid, pp. 56-8.

tenor of that closing part of the address was something of an afterthought for James Johnson himself, possibly after he had been shown a manuscript of Lijadu's book. James Johnson sent his own Yoruba Heathenism to the press in the same year and during the same visit to England. In the closing paragraph of that publication, it was only on the moral level that James Johnson conceded the possibility of a missionary link with the existing background of the Yoruba "and all other heathens in the world who have a moral code that only waits for the superior enlightenment of Christianity to raise to a higher plane".(18)

Lijadu's Christological method was to pick on the name and attributes of Òrúnmìlà as known in the praise-names given to him, to find out from bābálāwō what these names and attributes meant to them, and to examine to what extent and in what sense these could be applied to Jesus Christ.(19) Since the bābálāwō were the "theologians" in the Yoruba traditional religious setting, their exegesis on Òrúmìlà's praise-names would ensure from the start an accurate interpretation.

The praise-names of Òrúnmìlà as quoted by E.M. Lijadu can be translated as follows:(20)

Òrúnmìlà, witness at the allocation of destiny
The other part of Ọlọ́dùmarè
Surer than medicine
Perfect changer of the day of death

My Lord, the Incomprehensible,
Whom not to know is peril,
And whom to know is the beginning of effectiveness.

---

(18) James Johnson, Op. cit, p. 54.

(19) There are serious misgivings about this type of procedure, particularly on the ground that this is a typical case of eclecticism and syncretism. This protest and criticism of the method will be examined in a later section of this chapter under "Critical comments on Yoruba speculative Christology". For the time being, we proceed with a detailed study of the result of Lijadu's use of the method.

(20) For the Yoruba version of the praise-names see Appendix III. D.O. Epega Junior, in an interview (16/7/71) has argued for a Yoruba trinitarian explanation of the personality of God deducible from Ifa myths of creation as conveyed in these praisenames. Ọbàtalá was the actual artificer at the creation of man; Òrúnmìlà was the supervisor, "the witness at the allocation of destiny", Odúduwà gave the fiat which was symbolised by the clanging of a gong. It was the mysterious conjunction of these three persons in the godhead which was expressed in the superlative title Ọlọ́dùmarè.

My Lord, enthroned in the palace,
When moved, there is consternation.
Son of the horseman back home in Òyìn.
Clothed with a narrow strip which shames those who are clothed in rich velvet.

My Lord, Òpòkí, the brazen-eyed;
When the big-clawed tiger scratches his body,
The sound is heard all around.

Son of Òsówùnmí of Tapa tribe daintily dressed;
Lover of beauty, decked arms and legs in brass bracelets
Yet considerate of the old man with the walking-stick of soft ore,
My Lord, Ìgbò, passionately longed for as men desire freshly made pounded yam.

The climber's rope which makes the palm-tree unsteady,
Black death in the palm of a hand,
Vital force, constantly fed on red palm-oil, yet not changing colour.

The wisest of the wise,
Counsellor of weavers,
My Lord, the All-Sufficient,
The All-Reliable;
On whom to depend is life indeed!
The Conqueror of death.

My Lord, greeted first thing in the morning;
The careful one who has set the world in order,
Who strives for those who had no chance of living,
Who redeems the lot that was bad.

Like the snake, he glides on quietly on the leaf,
Like a prince, he stalks along in Òwò, his domain.

The first chapter in Lijadu's book is on the very name Òrúnmìlà. Lijadu found on investigation from bābāláwo that the name was understood in a literal sense, "It is heaven which knows how to separate two persons fighting". Yoruba bábalawo gave him a number of myths from the Ōdù-Ifá to support this interpretation of the name Òrúnmìlà, the divinity of divination, wisdom and guidance.(21) True wisdom is that which relates to the way of helping oneself to make sense of the world and to deal with the most basic and fundamental of human problems. The Yoruba give the names, "The One from heaven" and "He knows the way to reconciliation," to the Yoruba divinity connected with the central cult in the land. This indicates to Lijadu that our Yoruba ancestors were aware that there is a strained relationship of some significance between earth and heaven.

---

(21) For the stories from the Ifá oracular myths which tell about this need for a reconcilation, reference should be made to stories 1-6 in the Appendix on Ōdù-Ifá myths.

It also indicates that the most fundamental of human problems is thought of in terms of alienation and reconciliation. It is apparent from the myths that the Yoruba hold the opinion that no man knows the means by which man can be reconciled to heaven or who can be the agent for such a reconcilation. It follows also that there is a recognition that man cannot by himself resolve his problems.

According to the stories, there has been a fight, presented symbolically as between one man representing all earth-dwellers and one man representing all heaven-dwellers. The fight was started over 'a little rat' which was desired by both sides but which neither side was willing to concede to the other. On their own part, earth-dwellers deliberately refused to submit to heaven in the matter until much suffering had taught them a lesson. Ultimately, the reconciler came not from the earth but from heaven. And even then, it was only after the thing which led to the dispute had been 'sacrificed' (given up) by earth-dwellers that they were restored to favour. Lijadu considered these to be fundamental truths in the traditional religion of the Yoruba, the great theological significance of which would be realised only as these Yoruba insights were set side by side with the Holy Scriptures.

Accordingly, Lijadu proceeded to cite Biblical passages and ideas in order to draw out the parallel between the two and so to demonstrate his conviction that Yoruba religion could be regarded as a kind of preparation of the Yoruba people for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, he considered that Yoruba religion contained at least ideas and insights which might be used as a jumping-off ground for the presentation of New Testament ideas to the Yoruba. Thus, concerning the idea of a fight between earth and heaven, reference was made to such Biblical passages as the curse on Adam and Eve because of their disobedience (Gen. 3: 17-19, 24),

the Pauline theological inference from the same story that by one man's sin death reigned, and by the one man's sin judgement came to all men (Rom. 5: 17-19, 1 Cor. 15: 21-22). The representative position of the one over the many was emphasised particularly from the story of Àjó and Abẹ̀mọ̀.(22)

These two, Àjó and Abẹ̀mọ̀, were hunters in the story. Ajo was the hunter from the earth, and Abẹ̀mọ̀ was the hunter from heaven. The symbolic significance of the fact that they were hunters did not go without mention. Hunters held a significant position in Yoruba thought and tradition. It was they who made paths in the bush for others to walk in. The bush tracks which ultimately became high-roads linking village to village and market to market were originally tracks used by hunters as they roamed the forests looking for game. Most Yoruba towns and villages were originally resting-places of particular hunters or points of rendezvous used by groups of hunters which became settlements where others joined them. Big clan wars had started over disputes between individual hunters or groups of hunters. On the other hand, the guilds of hunters had over the period developed sanctions and other techniques for settling disputes among themselves and among others.

In the stories, the two hunters originally met annually for joint deliberations on the boundary line between earth and heaven. One of the stories claimed that Àjọ was made Ọlọ́dumarè's representative on earth from the beginning of time, and that to him was committed the control and keeping of order on earth. Abẹ̀mọ̀ stood in the same representative position with responsibility in heaven. The purpose served by their annual meeting also became representative. Àjọ would at such a meeting recount to Abẹ̀mọ̀ what complaints earth had against heaven, and Abẹ̀mọ̀ himself would also recount the complaints of heaven against the earth.

---

(22). Story No. 3 in Appendix II

They would both try to understand why the complaints had arisen, and then try to set the relationships right. In the traditional religious practice of the Yoruba, representatives of families sit together annually to consult with the ancestors as the original founders of their communities, and the myth is re-enacted.

We go on next to examine the cause of the fight itself. It is invariably because both representatives wished to have the same thing. The stories speak of digging the same hole to kill a single rat, or of hunting together in the bush and killing only one animal, with heaven claiming the right of exclusive possession. Lijadu saw in these stories an indication of the liberal attitude of God who possesses all things yet offers to share what he has with mankind in such a way that free-gift and dead loss are two sides of the same coin (or cloth). That is, what is free-gift to mankind is loss to God, and what is loss to man is the free possession of God. The Yoruba enquirer at the Ifá oracle, when told of an impending loss, would request that an investigation be made for him into what could be the cause of the loss. Should the oracle indicate that the impending loss was from heaven, no further investigation would be encouraged as to what human offence led to it. The enquirer would simply proceed to confess those ways which he could recollect in which he had appropriated heaven's free gift without due thanksgiving or acknowledgement to the donor or to whom it had been a loss. This is also the explanation of the patient long suffering and resignation of the Yoruba when he tries to reconcile himself to a loss with a shrug of the shoulders accompanied with a "just as God wills".

Commenting also on the single rat caught in the hunt which also became the cause of the misunderstanding between heaven and earth, Lijadu saw it as standing for God's abhorrence of unworthy service and of half-heartedness in worship. God, in Yoruba thought, would rather reject both the worship and the heart which brought it than receive it with all its impurities. In support of this interpretation, the very first verse in Ōdù-Ifá is quoted in evidence.

The introductory phrase of that verse runs thus:

Ótótóro, Órórórọ:
Ótọtọ l'á J'èpà, ótọtọ l'á jẹ imúmu,
Tóritóri l'á fún Ọbámákín n'ílẹ Ìránjẹ
K'o bá lẹ fí ọhún tóritóri fúnni. (Èjì-Ọ̀gbè)

Those untranslatable words, Ótótóro, Órórórọ, are phonaesthetic words standing for things in their fulness and perfection, in their purity without defilement. It means therefore to say that we give our fulness and pureness to the Great King in Iranje so that he can give us of his own fulness and perfection. And in relation to this Lijadu quoted Bible passages exhorting worshippers not to give that which is defiled or impure in offering to God (Leviticus 22: 20-21, I Chron. 28:9, 29: 17-19), asserting the uniqueness of God (Isa. 42: 8) and calling man to worship in spirit and in truth (John 4: 23-4).

It is necessary at this point to call attention to the use of the Bible by Lijadu in his exposition of Yoruba religion as a setting for the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On the whole, the Bible was used by Lijadu as a source-book for proof-texts to support his arguments. As this was the general theological and apologetic method in his day, it does not call for further comment. However, we should note the significance of the passages he chose. He considered these to be likely texts for Yoruba preachers who might wish to be relevant to cultural themes of their society.

There remains the idea that man refuses to acknowledge God until suffering persuades him to submit. To Lijadu, this was one of the ideas which could be deduced from the Ifá stories under reference. He then observed that the same idea was found in the Bible where it was "much pain in child-bearing", much of "thorns and thistles, many drivings from the habitation of man and the eating of grass like the mule, many a flood, many a confusion of tongues and languages, many swords and famine and plagues, etc." which generally led man to bow

down before the majesty of God. But further, in the Ifá stories, when man was ultimately willing to submit to God, the rat which mankind originally wanted to keep had to be sent back to heaven, and also the different sacrificial objects which were required were then readily given without further debate or hesitation. This, Lijadu observed, was the spirit of sacrifice.

From all these, Lijadu drew the conclusion that traditional Yoruba religion displayed and emphasised the truth that man could not return to God except with a sacrifice, and also that God Himself would have to take the initiative in the last resort. It must be noted that even in this Yoruba myth, it was Àbeno himself, the representative heaven-dweller, who came down to Àjo the representative earth-dweller. The story has to be taken as a dim recognition by the Yoruba that God Himself is the Reconciler. Isaiah's "Come, let us reason together" (1:18) and the vision of "the man in crimson from Bozra" (63:1-5, 8) came in handy here for Lijadu, and he did not hesitate to declare that the man from Bozra was he who was called in Yoruba traditional religion Òrúnmìlà - Salvation is of the Lord alone. This was the starting point for Lijadu's Christology.

The next section of Lijadu's treatment is by far the most difficult because in it he undertook to examine the possibility of a basis in Yoruba thought for both the coinherence of humanity and divinity in Jesus and also the relational position of Jesus in the Godhead. For these, his Yoruba point of departure was the appellation of Òrúnmìlà as "Witness at the allocation of Destiny: The other part of Ólódùmarè". Lijadu had indicated in his earlier book, Ifá, that our Yoruba ancestors believed that Ólórun in his almightiness, which surpassed human knowledge, had associated with Himself Someone whom He consulted in all things, one to whom He revealed all things (i.e. with whom He shared the secret and mystery of all things),

One whom He had made to be His witness in all things to the extent that there was nothing Ọlọdumare knew which the other one did not know, and there was nothing which Ọlọdumare saw which the Other one did not see. That Other One was called "Ọrunmila, Witness at the allocation of Destiny, The Other Half of Ọlọdumare".

The phrase which we have translated here as the other half or the other part is taken by the Yoruba from the nature of the calabash which is put to daily use in every household, for drinking, for holding things, for washing clothes, or for carrying a load in agricultural life and in trading. Such a calabash is obtained from a gourd(23) which may grow in different sizes and shapes, and which when cut into two looks like a platter or bowl. It is the bottom part of a calabash which is generally put to greater use; the top part which because of its shape does not sit flat is generally used as the lid. Thus, the bottom part is usually called 'igba' and the top part is called 'igba-keji' (second calabash, literally). Igbakeji in figurative use then means the other part of something. Of course, it sometimes carries a connotation of subordination since the igbakeji is used mainly as a lid.

In his second book, Lijadu examined briefly how and in what sense Ọrunmila could be referred to as Eleri Ipin, Witness at the allocation of Destiny. The answer of Yoruba babalawo to this enquiry is recorded in a number of Ifa stories. In fact, there are three cycles of Ifa stories giving three variant explanations of the relation of Ọrunmila to Ọlọdumare and with particular reference to the creation of man and the allocation of Destiny to man and other things. The first answer briefly is this, that Ọrunmila was the witness at the allocation of Destiny because it was he with whom

---

(23) Botanical name is Lagenaria vulgaria. See R.C. Abraham, Dictionary of Modern Yoruba, University of London Press, 1958, p. 282.

Ọlọdumare consulted in the heavenly places about man's destiny.(24)

Secondly, Orunmila is Eleri Ipin because it was he whom Ọlọdumare had made the head of all divinities (irunmale) and of all things both on earth and in heaven.(25)

Thirdly, Orunmila is Eleri Ipin because when all the divinities (irunmale) hastily collected bundles of riches and wealth from heaven to bring with them to the earth, it was he alone, Orunmila, who collected the bundles containing heads and allocated a head (destiny) to each human person according to his personal responsibility and discretion.(26)

These Ifa stanzas and their stories are evidence that our Yoruba ancestors were convinced that beside Olorun Ọlọdumare, there was only one other who knew the lot of all things on earth and in heaven, and who, because he thus knew, became head over all. Lijadu pointed to these deductions as valuable truths in the religion of our Yoruba ancestors and took them as pointers to the people's prevision of the coming of Jesus Christ. He contended that these insights need to be brought side by side with quotations from the Holy Bible as a guide to those who wish to have a meaningful dialogue with Yoruba 'pagans' concerning Jesus Christ.

There is a common conviction, then derivable both from Biblical truth and from the wisdom of Yoruba men of religion that there is only one beside Olorun Ọlọdumare who knows the whys and wherefores of all things on earth and in heaven, and that this only one is head over all. In Job 38-41, it is found that Job could not answer those questions concerning understanding and knowledge which God put to him, and it can be said also that there has been no one since Job who has been able

---

(24). Of the many Ifa stories in which Ọlọdumare and Orunmila were referred to as being in consultation, one such is in our Appendix 8.

(25). For the stories in evidence see Nos. 9 & 10 in the Appendix.

(26). The supportive story is no. 11 in the Appendix.

to answer, except "the only One" who in Proverbs 8: 22-30 is described as the Wisdom of God. And who is he who has confidently claimed and asserted knowledge as in this Proverbs passage? He is none other than Jesus Christ who is spoken of in 1 Cor. 1: 24 as "the power of God and the Wisdom of God". It is He who is called by Yoruba men of religion Orunmila. It is this Christ who is the Wisdom of God who is at the same time the Head over all, Ephesians 1:22, Now, this Christ who is Head over all has been made of God one worthy of universal worship both in earth and in heaven. 1 Cor. 11: 3: Phil. 2: 10-11, Heb. 1:6, Psalm, 97: 7.

Further, we see in the Ifa stanzas and their stories under discussion(27) that the Yoruba believe that Olorun existed before all things, that the existence of things other than Olorun Himself was the outcome of a ritual which Olorun performed, and that the cost of the ritual was borne equally by both Olodumare and Orunmila, and that no one else had power over Esu except He who is equal with God. Lijadu was deeply moved by the fact that he could find such insights in Yoruba traditional religion. To him, the ideas were precious theological truths, and the discovery of them in Yoruba Traditional Religion was a great boon to Christian apologetics. There was no doubt at all in his own mind that in considering Olorun Olodumare, the Yoruba would distinguish on the one hand between the essence of His being and the essence of the being of earthly creatures, and on the other hand between the essence in the being of Orunmila and the essence in the being of earthly creatures.

In other words, he considered it possible in Yoruba theological reflection to distinguish between divinity in Olodumare and creatureliness in other beings. At the same time he saw a distinction between divinity and humanity even in the very being of Olodumare and Orunmila, both separately and together. Surely, we have here in this

---

(27) Appendix 8-13.

tortuous argument an indication that Lijadu considered that the Greek metaphysical dichotomy, which lies behind this type of reasoning, is essential to Christian theology. As such, it would be considered invaluable to find a basis for it in indigenous Yoruba thought. That, he believed, he had found and established here. To bring the idea out, he took pains to construct two Yoruba compound words which could have been very useful were this type of metaphysic considered inevitable to Christian theology. He spoke of 'the thing of His Being' (ohun-iwa Re) for God, and 'the primal instrument or material for his creation' (ohun-elo ipile eda) for man. All the same, in using this latter phrase, he could not have been aware of the emphasis on ex nihilo in the Christian doctrine of creation.

From there, Lijadu proceeded to bring these insights into relation with passages from the Holy Scriptures to produce material for an intelligent dialogue with Yoruba 'pagans' concerning Christ. The following are some of the issues which he indicated had come up in his conversation with the babalawo.

(a) It is fitting to attribute to Him who is called Olodumare real existence before all things. The Bible surely asserts this about God. Psalm 90: 2, Job 36: 26, Rom. 11: 36, Heb. 3: 4, Rev. 1: 8. The thought of Olodumare's prior existence before all things could be said to lie behind the story in Odu Ifa of Olodumare together with His Associate Orunmila being in need of things at a particular time. That is, there was a time before other things had been created when Olodumare and His Associate had existed.

As for Olorun, every creature had appeared to Him as if they were already in existence even when they had not yet been created. As for man, it is impossible for us to imagine, see or have anything which has not yet had existence.(28)

---

(28) Certainly, Lijadu here provides for us some evidence of his being familiar with some versions of Bishop Berkeley's Idealism, though not with the later criticism of that philosophy.

But when Yoruba babalawo versed in the Ifa cultic system were asked the question, Did Olodumare and Orunmila have prior existence to the other?, they answered with a display of profound theological insight: "Nobody can tell which of the two had prior existence, in so much as no-one can distinguish between the dimensions of a garden and the garden itself or say which is older of a garden and its dimensions". Literally, it means that it is on the very day that a person cuts the bush for a farm-plot and says 'I have a farm', that he has the dimensions and boundaries. So, as it is unreasonable to ask which comes first, the garden of its dimensions, so it is impossible to answer the question, Which one - Olodumare or Orunmila - had existence prior to the other.

(b) The existence of any other being beside Olorun Olodumare cost him something. The cost was a sacrifice. The cost of this sacrifice fell equally on Olodumare and His Associate.

Taking the Yoruba word 'ebo' to mean sacrifice, Lijadu did not fight shy of the question of what meaning could be found in the suggestion that Olodumare offered a sacrifice. He defined the verb, to sacrifice, as expending oneself or something which substitutes for oneself in order to bring about some benefit to one's self or to another. He claimed this to be the original or fundamental meaning of sacrifice. So, when the Yoruba say that Olodumare or Orunmila offered a sacrifice, it would mean that they expended themselves so that they might come to possess those things round about us, visible and invisible, which are valuable to our existence. And an important element in the Yoruba conviction on this issue is that all things visible and invisible (i.e. all created things) came into being, exist and remain in existence simply because of the sacrificial act and sacrificial being of Olodumare and Orunmila at and from the beginning of all things. The place and position of Orunmila is evident here, especially in as much as it is He and Olodumare who offered themselves sacrificially for every creature.

(c) No other one has power over Esu save Him who is equal to God in all respects. It is true that the Yoruba also call Esu the Elegbara (the Obstinate and Strong One), yet theyconfess and acknowledge in their worship forms and beliefs that they believe in the absolute supremacy of Olodumare and His Associate. The explanation given by babalawo themselves when asked by Lijadu as to the justification for the worship of Esu, whom they recognised as evil, was as follows: Olorun created Esu and gave him a position of heavenly authority with Himself. When Olorun realised that Esu was no longer good, He drove him out of heaven on to the earth. The power of God far surpasses that of Esu, but in the same way is the power of Esu much greater than the power of men. Esu is already created strong and powerful from heaven. This cannot change, and man cannot reverse it. We do well therefore to plead with him not to use his power to harm us. Heaven was uncomfortable for Esu; but he seems to be enjoying himself here on earth. There is a Yoruba saying which goes thus: If a man does not enjoy benefits on his paternal side, he can enjoy them on the maternal.

This line of thought Lijadu considered to be a valuable one in indicating a helpful approach to Christian endeavour among Yoruba Ifa men of religion. It would make them realise that not only did Olorun drive Esu into the world, where his presence spells tribulation for mankind, but He (God) has also sent one who has power over Esu to be the Captain of Man's salvation, even Jesus Christ the Saviour. He found Biblical support for this apologetic exposition in such passages as Luke 11: 21-22, 1 Thess. 5: 8-10, Heb. 2: 14-15, 1 John 3:8.

Going over to the clause "My Lord, the Incomprehensible. Whom not to know is peril and whom to know is the beginning of effectiveness" in the praise-names of Orunmila, Lijadu started by examining the meaning of the phrase "Oluwa mi "my Lord", as used frequently by the Yoruba in honour of and respect for their orisa.

The use of the same phrase is very common in everyday language. A wife uses it to express respect for her husband. A slave uses it to express honour and loyalty to his owner. Towns people use it in reference to their king. But its use is supremely in the language of religion and adoration, to honour and pay homage to an orisa as an object of worship. When it is used here by the babalawo in prayer and adoration, and directed to Orunmila and Olodumare, it signifies what a slave owes to his owner, or a citizen owes the King. It can also be spoken of as excelling the honour and respect accorded to any orisa below the grade of Orunmila. Of course, one has to understand the rank allocated by the babalawo to Orunmila vis a vis Olodumare to appreciate the devotion which lies behind the ascription of Oluwa - attributes to him. This has been explained in the previous section, but Lijadu at this point noted that the words of St. Paul in 1 Cor. 8:5-6 are applicable here: "There may be so-called gods ..... yet for us there is one God". So, in his thought, he has gone over completely in identifying Orunmila and Olodumare.

Next comes the phrase Aboonotan which has been rendered as "the Incomprehensible" here. Yoruba babalawo use the name Aboonotan in relation to Orunmila in two different connotations:

(i) It stands for the impossibility of fully knowing the nature of Orunmila both with respect to his divinity and also with respect to his Humanity. To know, here, means to know the origin and therefore to know the nature and circumstances of the being of another. As we have noted earlier, a babalawo is filled with utter dread when he has to repeat the story of the origin of Orunmila or quote any Ifa stanza related thereto. The mystery of Orunmila is in a literal sense unutterable. Lijadu recalled here that for months when his bābālawo informant was faced with the importunate enquiry as to the nature of Orunmila, the bābālawo would simply reply with the rhetorical question,

"Who can tell the story of the maize back to its origin in heaven?" This might at first sound like an exasperated surprise that anyone should bother to ask a question which obviously could not be answered. But this interpretation of the babalawo's rhetorical question would be wrong. The fact is that a babalawo is frightened by what might happen to him should be speak aloud the unutterable mysteries of Orunmila's nature. To speak of it or reveal it, even if he knew it, might lead to death, mental derangement or some other misfortune. Such dread is evidently referred to in a number of Ifá stories, as some of the quotations in this relation can show. Stories 14-20 in the Appendix can be instanced in this respect, as also such other stories which relate how the other divinities endeavoured in every way to discover the secrets of Orunmila's wisdom, power and authority. The stories indicate that in spite of all their efforts, they could not know his secrets. Special attention needs to be given to the story in story 18 which indicates that not even Esù was able to get into the secret of Orunmila's power.

(ii) The meaning is passing imperceptibly from knowing the story of origin to knowing the secret of how to gain control. To know the story of someone's origin is equal to knowing his nature, and knowing the nature of someone amounts to gaining access to the secret which gives away the means of gaining control over that person. Thus, it is noted in stories 21 and 23 that natural elements, e.g. fire and water, had no power over Orunmila and could not apprehend him. Story 22 indicates that what is eaten, even poison (denoted here by unripe fruits), has no power to destroy Orunmila. And Story 24 asserts that not even the time process or the change of seasons could have any power over the continuing existence of Orunmila. The sum-total of this emphasis is that the being of Orunmila does not depend on any earthly elements, either singly like fire, the firmament, water, sun, moon or star, or in combination like divers fruits, seeds and plants which come into existence through a combination of the above-mentioned

elements and forces. Nor is Orunmila's existence controlled by times and seasons measurable by hours, days, months or years.

This conception concerning Orunmila can be put side by side with what the Holy Scriptures say about Jesus Christ, e.g. Heb. 1: 10-12. "They will perish, but thou art the same ..... thy years will have no end". Thus, this is an indication that Yoruba Christian adoration can legitimately transfer this attribute of Orunmila to Jesus. But this review would not be complete until we have added evidence from Ifa stories to show that not even human beings and their machinations could prevail over Orunmila. In so far as he had passed through many tribulations caused by the wicked plots of men, before succeeding to his present position of honour and veneration, he is acknowledged as divine among the irunmale. This additional line of evidence is found in stories 25-27.

Again, Orunmila is referred to as one "whom not to know is peril, and whom to know is the beginning of effectiveness". There are two senses in which this praise-name and appellation has been applied to Orunmila. First of all, that Orunmila as a divinity controlling divination does not respond fully in so far as he is unknown and unknowable to man. The mystery of Orunmila's nature determines the extent to which he is propitious for men in divination. Thus, the Yoruba believe that if only they could understand fully the nature and being of Orunmila, then they would have power over him, and he would be completely at their disposal in all eventualities.

In addition, there is the question of knowing Orunmila in the sense of knowing the Ifa corpus of myths and oracles necessary for divination. This is professional knowledge reserved for the diviners.

But the stanzas and stories of the Ifa corpus are so numerous as to make complete memorization practically impossible. This makes divination difficult because no one knows all the stanzas in the various

combinations and permutations of Odu-Ifa. It means that no one can know the complete answers to all the various problems and exigencies of life which may arise at any time for any one, in relation to which an enquirer can turn to a babalawo.

We note that Lijadu did not comment on whether the praise-names can be applied to Jesus in this latter sense. But if an answer is sought to the question, it is the Aladura who have provided it as we shall indicate later on. To them the name of Jesus is potent in itself, irrespective of a man's theological understanding of Jesus. It is readiness to call the name of Jesus which to the Aladura is the beginning of effectiveness. In the case of Jesus, knowledge would become faith, interpreted in terms of power. Thus, applied to Jesus the appellation would become "Whom not to believe is peril, and to believe in whom is the beginning of effectiveness".

The next group of phrases from the praise-names of Orunmila which Lijadu has sought to apply to Jesus is "My Lord, enthroned in the palace; When moved, there is consternation; Opoki, the brazen-eyed". This praise-name uses the vocabulary of Yorubal royal architecture, which must be briefly explained.

Kings and head-chiefs, and other people of means in Yoruba communities would build for themselves sprawling houses with long corridors leading from the inner rooms to the exit gate. That long corridor was known as enu-owa. When such a corridor was built narrow and attached to a poor man's house, it was called enu-iho. The particle enu here stands for opening, entrance, literally mouth. Enu-iho means the entrance to a hole or hovel, Per contra, enu-owa means the entrance to a paramount chief's house. This is the original context in which the word enu-owa was used. And Orunmila is here described as Olowa, he who has an owa.

However, owa specifically has two significations. One is the mud dais where the paramount chief and subordinate chiefs sit in council or in audience. From this usage, it was later extended to the mud benches which poor people build round the walls inside their rooms for special guests to sit upon. The man of the house would keep his sword or cutlass or other implements of strength on the owa bench. A verse in the Odu corpus begins thus: "The top of the owa looks elevated as if it were the diviner, but the diviner himself is still to come to sit on it". (i.e. The person who comes to consult the babalawo looks at the owa with awe, but it is not the owa which is going to preside over the divinatory process). This is a verse from the oracles quoted in connection with initiation into the Ifa cult. The series of oracles in this connection are called "Ogbe-Ate". Another verse, this time from the Ika-Oturupon group says "The owa dais is not the place to keep a pet tortoise, neither are snails kept at the entrance to a room".

By inference from the first meaning, owa stands for the power, authority and honour given to the person who sits on the owa dais. Thus, a chief is addressed as Olowa, i.e. one who holds the first rank among those who sit on the owa and thus has the last word on the owa, one who possesses the owa. Kings and paramount chiefs in the Ekiti area of Yoruba land are called Owa. Yoruba people of Ekiti descent would refer to themselves both as Owa's slaves and as Owa's sons, and if they went out for communal labour or to a public gathering in the interest of the whole community, would say they went on Owa's service or errand.

Olowa, therefore, is one who holds the position of highest authority and honour among chiefs, one who is placed on a high throne among rulers. In giving this title, Olowa, to Orunmila, our forefathers have placed him on the highest elevation both on earth and heaven.

This is a further confirmation of the point which has already been made in another context as to the position of Orunmila in relation to Olodumare. To emphasize this authority of Orunmila, however, our fathers added the adjective aiyèrè to the title of Olowa. This declares with added emphasis (a) that we must not move him from his position, and (b) that he will not give up his position. There are various Ifa verses which contain the warning that any attempt to oust Orunmila from his position of authority would lead to catastrophe. Stories 34-40 make it evident that a basic conviction of our forefathers has been that to move Orunmila from his eminent position is fraught with danger for the sons of men, and that he himself in any case does not intend to resign his position. This, as we have indicated above, is why he was called Olowa aiyèrè. And to apply this praise-name by transference to Jesus is therefore an indication that it is Jesus alone who is worthy of being regarded as King eternal enthroned in glory.

Lijadu then went on to the phrase Opòki, A-mu-ìdè-s' ōjú in which Orunmila was described as brazen eyed. This he also related to the subsequent phrase in which Orunmila was described as Ọmọ Ọsọ pà 'dè-n' ọwọ-pà-'dè-n'èsè, ọ nbèrè àtẹpà ọjẹ: Lover of beauty, arms and legs decked in brass bracelets, yet considerate of the old man with the walking-stick of softer metal". At this point, Lijadu turned his process of interpretation round, and engaged in a meditation on Rev.1:13-15. By comparison he saw that similar or parallel metaphors and similes have been used both in this biblical passage and in the Ọdu-Ifa quoted as story 40 in the Appendix, thus drawing the first conclusion that the Biblical passage helps us to appreciate the position of honour that our fathers gave to Orunmila in their hearts. And then, secondly, Lijadu reverted to the observation which he had made several times before that the Yoruba man of religion has in this instance caught the vision of Him whose "feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace" (Rev. 1: 15.)

The rich possibilities of Orunmila's praise-name as ab'iku-j'igbo when applied to Jesus did not pass unnoticed by Lijadu. The verbal phrase ja igbo or kan igbo is used of rams when they meet strength with strength and lock horns. A-b'iku-j'igbo therefore means he who locked horns with death. As applied to Orunmila, it shows the belief of our fathers that Orunmila is one who has been bold enough to challenge death and has fought to victory. Relying on the evidence of the myths for the victory of Orunmila over disease and death, the babalawo is not afraid of infection as he goes in and out to visit patients and to treat various diseases in the name of Orunmila. With these facts in mind, Lijadu did not hesitate to draw christological implications with regard to the resurrection of Christ and the victory which he thus won over death. A parallel was struck also with the promise of the Risen Christ to His disciples that as they went out in His name they would pick up serpents without being harmed, they would drink deadly poison without being hurt, and that they would be able to cast out demons and heal the sick with the laying of hands. (Mark 16: 16-18). Attention might also be called to the fact that Christ Himself, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, "took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Matt: 8:17).

In a lively excursus, Lijadu pursued further the role of healing found both in the ministry of Orunmila and also in the ministry of Jesus and His disciples. He discovered that the Yoruba held the belief that towards the task of preserving order on earth, Olodumare had from the start given Orunmila the power to heal, and part of the authority for this was invested in a staff which Orunmila was given with the instruction that he should carry it with him at all times.

There are many stories told by our fathers of the staff and the healing power it possesses. Many were the healing wonders which Orunmila was able to perform among men, which healing work the babalawo as his successors continue to this day.

Lijadu noted with excitement that in the Bible the staff is symbolic of many things. All these different symbolisms are found in the staff as understood by the babalawo in the Ifa cult. He noted, for example, that in the Bible the staff in the hands of God Himself is the staff of might. Psalm 110: 1-2 and Psalm 2: 7-9 were quoted in evidence. We note that in the Yoruba translation of the Bible, 'the rod of 'iron' in Ps. 2: 7-9 is rendered as 'iron staff'. Lijadu's exegesis is based on this translation. The other meanings of the staff symbolism in the Bible noted by Lijadu include the following: When used in connection with Jesus Christ, it was the staff of a shepherd for the protection and comfort of the sheep (Psalm 23: 1-4). In the story of Jacob and his children, it was the staff of responsibility, conferring the rights and responsibility of the head of the family (Heb. 11:21). In the blessing of Judah, the staff represents princely rule in the kingdom (Gen. 49:10). But when we turn to the stories of Moses and Aaron, of Elisha, and the angel who appeared to Gideon, the staff was given for working miracles (Ex. 8: 16-17, Nun. 20:7-8, 2 Kings 4:26, Judges 6:21). What impressed Lijadu was that these five meanings of a staff are attributed by our fathers to the staff which Olodumare gave to Orunmila.

Orunmila has been known also as "The Careful One who has set the world in order, Who strives for those who have no chance of living, Who redeems the lot of those who came with a bad destiny". Behind this appellation lies the belief of our fathers that because Orunmila excelled all other divinities and spirits (orisa iti imale) in wisdom, there was committed to him the task of ordering the earth and setting right whatever may go wrong. Hence the name Ogege, A-gb'aiye-gun which we have translated here as "The Careful One who has set the world in order". That is why also Orunmila is given the name "Wisest of the wise". Our fathers also believed that it was because Orunmila denied himself all riches and popularity that Olodumare gave him the supervisory role which he now has on earth, We note also that

the name Omolihorogbo was given to Orunmila for his successful administration in upholding all things and setting things right on earth. The name Omolihorogbo also points to his deep concern for the lot of man and indicates too the divine and human elements in the nature of Orunmila. The similarity to the biblical and theological ideas about Jesus is clear.

Finally, Lijadu ended his christological interpretation of the praise-names of Orunmila as he started, on a soteriological note. The appellation of Orunmila as Odudu ti i du ori emere: o tu ori ti ko sian se has been translated here as "He who strives for those who have no chance of living, Who redeems the lot of those who came with a bad destiny". This arose out of the belief of our fathers in the behaviour of spirits, apparitions and ghosts, sometimes called emere. These ghosts, so it was believed, go about in groups, looking for a place to live. Should they happen to meet a pregnant woman, they would drive out the child in the womb, and one of them would take the child's place. But when such a child was born, it would not live long. Some such children would die soon after birth, others would live to adolescence and then die suddenly. Their spirits would roam around again for some time after which they would repeat the same process of entering into another womb and being born again and dying, ad infinitum. Such children who are bound to die are called emere. They are said to have a bad head or an evil head. It is believed that the only way to change their head and therefore make them live longer is by specific rituals as may be directed by the babalawo. Such devices which the babalawo may prescribe and help to administer are known as the act of "struggling or striving for and protecting the head of an emere", didu ori emere. And that is what Orunmila was believed to be capable of doing in a unique way.

Similarly, persons of a dissolute character are said to have "a not-too-good or a bad head" (ori aisian). Those who are good but who fall into the hands of the wicked, those who get into trouble, or who are constantly shadowed by sorrows, misfortune or any other calamity, are said to have a bad head (ori aisian). Our fathers believed that Orunmila was the One who reformed the bad head and made it good by prescribing rituals and other devices appropriate to such a re-creation. These ideas are developed in various myths.

We note that the myths referred to here indicate that there is an endemic badness in man. They suggest also that it is only corrected through a ritual "washing of the head". It is only by "the washing of the head" that man's lot on earth can be improved, the problems of existence resolved, and the tangles of life unknotted. It was in the search for someone to perform this cleansing or washing of the head that our fathers encountered the spirits and idols which are now worshipped in our land. Some names given to children at birth express this longing for him who can wash the head; and any measure of satisfaction they feel they receive from this cleansing is recorded in such names as:

Sangowemimo	-	Sango washes me clean
Osowemimo	-	Oso washes me clean
Osunwemimo	-	Osun washes me clean
Ifawemimo	-	Ifa washes me clean.

Well did the early Yoruba Christian sing:

One may wash his head in sea water,

Another may wash his feet in the lagoon;

Only he who is washed by Jesus

Is clean body and soul .....

Is clean body and soul .....

Is clean body and soul .....

Only he who is washed by Jesus

Is clean body and soul.

The concluding paragraphs of Lijadu's interpretation rounded up his thoughts on a note of Christian affirmation and with a trinitarian doxology which are better quoted in direct and full translation. "In conclusion, we who are Christians and children of the light know for certain that Orunmila was not able to wash off the evil which the guilt of sin has brought upon mankind. Orunmila was not able to turn away the wrath of God from the sinner. Neither was the washing from Orunmila sufficient to change man in a radical way, to sanctify man, to lead man into godliness, to restore for mankind the peace and divine favour which man had lost. Should Orunmila ask of the Yoruba who has turned Christian, 'Who then is there to wash your head?', we have a ready answer. It is Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God, who stands out to bring to mankind all the virtues of a ritual washing of the head.

"Thanks be to God Almighty (Olorun Olodumare) who has given us His Holy Word wherein we are taught to go to Jesus for perfect and sure cleansing, by which we are saved up to the end (John 13:1-10). Thanks be to Jesus Christ our Saviour who so loved us as to give His blood for our ritual cleansing, yea, as an expiation for the sins of the world (1 John 1: 7-10, 2: 1-2). And thanks be to the Holy Spirit who does not cease to convince the world of the Saviour (1 Cor. 6: 9-11). Neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor revilers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of GOD. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God".

3. THE CHRISTOLOGY OF FAGBENRO-BEYIOKU AND A.O. OSIGA

Fágbénró-Béyíòkú's Orunmilaism has to be seen in its context as an extension of Lijadu's approach to christology. As such an extension, it exposes the risks involved in using categories from local pagan or non-Christian myths for the expression of biblical idea.

There is no doubt that Fagbenro-Beyioku was moved by a more zealous nationalistic spirit than was Lijadu. Apart from the religious and theological ideas which certainly motivated both writings, Fagbenro-Beyioku also set himself the task of disproving the then current idea of the primitive character of Yoruba culture. His method was to point out the parallel between Yoruba and certain European cultural ideas. For this reason, he had to include in the comparisons drawn not only biblical, but also European, astrological ideas, similar to what he had already attempted in his previous booklet, Ifá Brochure .

What Beyioku claimed was that Ọrunmilaism could be taken as "the basis of Jesuism", or in other words, that it should be possible to proceed from the basis of what he called Ọrunmilaism to faith in Jesus Christ.(29) His position therefore was a Christological one, along the same lines as that of Lijadu in the latter's Book II.

The difference between Fagbenro-Beyioku and Ọ̀ṣìgà lies in the place that each gives to Jesus. To the latter, Jesus is the Messaiah of the Jews, each nation or race has its own Messiah and prophet, and the prophet whom God has sent to the Yoruba is Ọ̀rúnmìlà. To Fagbenro-Beyioku however, Jesus is the Saviour for all men and for all races; and for the Yoruba to understand Him genuinely, the analogy of Ọ̀rúnmìlà becomes inevitable, and the literary style of the Ifá oracle becomes desirable. Here, he was conscious that he was following in the footsteps of Lijadu from whom he quoted the praise-names of Ọ̀rúnmìlà with due acknowledgement and respect.

---

(29). A. Fagbenro-Beyioku, Ifá, popularly referred to as Ifá Brochure, Lagos, 1940; followed by Ọrunmilaism, the basis of Jesuism, Lagos, 1943 esp. pp. 8 & 9, 13, 17f, 21f, 23ff.

In contrast, for Osiga and his followers in the Ijo Orunmila, though not them alone, the fact that Jesus was born a Jew or that Christianity was brought to Nigeria by people who were not only foreigners but - more seriously - were of the same race as those who colonised the country is the scandal of particularity.(30) Thus, for Osiga, there could be no Christology. The way had been barred by this particularity. This scandal had first to be explained before it was possible to explore the significance of Jesus for the present historical period in the life of the people and country.

4. CRITICAL COMMENTS ON YORUBA SPECULATIVE CHRISTOLOGY

The rest of this study is devoted to critical comments on the speculative theology of Yoruba "Ethiopians" and the development of other Christological approaches by Yoruba "Zionists" and others.

(a) The pioneering role of E.M. Lijadu

For the development of Yoruba Theology, Lijadu needs to be recognised as a true pioneer in taking full theological regard of the traditional religious beliefs of his people as expressed in the official priestly and cultic deposit of ideas, yet at the same time, keeping very close to his Bible as a source of revelation. The two books which are of major theological significance among his writings are Ifa (1897) and Orunmla (1908). We judge the second book to be more important that the first in that it goes beyond the usual theistic questions. It seeks the heart of the Christian Gospel, and looks for ways of portraying Jesus Christ, His nature and His work, to the Yoruba man of religion in such a way that the latter can see in Jesus the fulfilment of his dreams, longings, aspirations and hopes.

---

(30) A. Fagbenro-Beyioku, 1943, argued first from the universality of faith pp. 9-12, then he identified Jesus Christ with Jewish history and Christian history with Near East and European history, pp. 26-29.

As for Osiga, his booklet Ipadabo is full of it. The title of that books is really an adaptation of the title of the lecture by Edward W. Blydon, delivered in Lagos, January 1891. "The Return of the Exiles and the West African Church", calling on 'Christian natives along the coast to establish a Church of their own, so as to be able to deal with their own problems with which strangers cannot safely or profitably intermediate' (p. 24).

It is on the issues of the Christological dimension in theology that E.M. Lijadu was a pioneer among Yoruba churchmen. Indeed, during the sixty odd years which have passed since he published Orunmila, there has not yet been any significant following up of his leadership towards a christological orthodoxy in the Yoruba Church.

A development is noticeable in the theological thinking of Lijadu between 1897 and 1908, and it might be stated as follows. He started as a missionary with the theological assumption that Yoruba traditional religion was paganism. This assumption, he looked for material to prove. Thus, in the first book of his projected trilogy, he took the apologetic line common in his day, that of seeing the Churches in confrontation with pagan sacrificial systems to which the Christian response was taken to be the declaration of Christ as the end of sacrifices, especially of such sacrifices as were meant to appease a supposedly angry God or to wash away sin. As it happens, these are not primarily the kind of 'sacrifices' known in Yoruba traditional religion, as we will show below in the section on Rituals.

Then E.M. Lijadu, because either of a nationalist feeling or of a more enlightened theological insight or from a deep conviction born of a better knowledge of traditional religion, changed his stance. It is possible that all these were combined together in his change of position and in the development of his theological thinking: some nationalism mixed with missionary concern, and a more sympathetic understanding of the local religious situation. He surely felt conscious at this time of the falsity of the "White Man's Burden" idea. He wanted a Christianity which could be securely planted in the soil of the country in preaching, in theology, in personnel. There were others who shared the same concern. But they all went about it in different fashions. It was only he who deliberately set out to attempt a restatement of Christian theology. A comment is necessary on the place of nationalism in such an undertaking.

(b) From Comparative Religion to Indigenization.

All the men we have chosen as representing the period we have defined in this thesis were men with a concern. They were all concerned that the Christian Gospel should become indigenous in Yorubaland. There were those with Missionary commitments. James Johnson and E.M. Lijadu were ordained Yoruba Christians and therefore engaged daily in the evangelization of the land according to the tenets of the Church to which they belonged. Those others who were not ordained were fired with a nationalistic spirit which infected their Christian commitment. They were anxious that the land of their birth should consciously and fully possess the Christian Faith, and that their traditional religion and culture be absorbed into Christianity. This nationalistic feeling surely gave them a somewhat different spirit from that of the foreign missionaries who came to work in the land and by whom the ordained men were employed as "Agents" working on behalf, and towards the objectives of a distant Missionary Society. It drove them to carry their effort beyond Comparative Religion to Indigenization.

There is a theological task for Christians in nationalism, if only nationalists and others can see it. The theological task which emerged out of the nationalism of the generation with which we are dealing was that of formulating an enriched theology in support of their contention that Christianity was not a White Man's Religion. The faith of the believing Church has to be strengthened from materials drawn from the life of the country. This is a task which Theology owes to the life of the Church for, after all, theology is properly the function of the believing community either done corporately or vicariously through its intellectually articulate members. Theology as a conversation between theologians needs to start from issues arising from this enterprise of bringing the Gospel of Jesus home to the people.

That it is easy to mis-state the theological problem, especially in the context of nationalist concerns, has been demonstrated by the instances of T.A.J. Ogunbiyi and A.O. Osiga. The former was a clergyman, the latter was a layman. But both stated the problem for themselves differently from Lijadu. The premise from which Lijadu started was Jesus Christ; the premise for which Ogunbiyi and Osiga started was Yoruba Traditional Religion. As we have seen, the problem for Lijadu was to find a way of proclaiming to the Yoruba that the act of God in Jesus Christ belonged also to the Yoruba. But for Ogunbiyi and Osiga, it was a problem of finding a way of demonstrating that the religion of our fathers stood up to comparison with European religion. They quickly discovered that by European Religion they could not mean Christianity. They were surprised, or at least impressed, to have discovered ancient European traditional religions as represented by the gods of Greece and Rome and the surviving mystery religion of the freemasons. It was with this European traditional religion that ultimately they compared Yoruba Traditional Religion.

The Comparison of Yoruba Traditional Religion with the religions of Greece and Rome was quite a favourite in those days. It was done by the Rev. (later Bishop) James Johnson in his Yoruba Heathenism. Only in the last paragraph of his book was James Johnson able to make a reference to Jesus Christ, and then only to say that our Yoruba ancestors had no knowledge of Him. Later in the same year, James Johnson shifted the ground of his thinking and made the suggestion that an anticipation of the cosmic work of Christ could be found and should be looked for in the religion of our fathers. Fagbenro-Beyioku extensively compared the ideas in Yoruba divinatory systems to parallel ideas in Greek and Roman occultism. A similar comparison on a general religious level was found also in the writing of A. O. Osiga.

The argument drawn from this comparison was that if it was tolerable for a European to be both a Christian and a Mason at the same time, it should be equally permissible for a Yoruba who is a Christian to be at the same time an Ogbóni or Ónifá. It was not very clear in those days that the Lijadu question was different from the Ogunbiyi or Osiga question. Because the material being used was from the same quarry, it was assumed that the two projects were the same. The distinction was made the more blurred because Ogunbiyi kept hopping from one to the other at different times. The Churches saw the danger posed by the Ogunbiyi-Osiga question, but the Lijadu question was not appreciated. The answer given in Church circles to the Ogunbiyi-Osiga undertaking was extended tacitly to the Lijadu venture.

(c) From mythical Órúnmila to the Jesus of History

For his own part, E.M. Lijadu undertook to prove the anticipation for the Christ event in Yoruba traditional religion. This was what he attempted when he wrote his Órúnmla in which he decidely introduced Christological themes. This approach is based on the interpretation of Christ as the Messiah long expected who ultimately came and did away with sin, demonstrating His conquest over sin and death and the devil. From this standpoint, Lijadu proceeded to demonstrate that the expectation in Ifá of "He who is to come" was centred on Órúnmila, and the fulfilment is expressed anticipatorily in the praise-names given to him. He saw that this was a promonition of Jesus in the Ifá systen though in an inadequate way. He then concluded that what remained was for the Christian to appropriate on behalf of Jesus the fulfilment of the anticipation expressed in the stories and praise-names of Órúnmila. This nethod in itself now calls for some critical appraisal.

First, we take a look at an objection which could be raised today that Lijadu was using traditional religion to answer questions in which it had not shown much direct interest.

This, as a method, can turn out to be unfair to a non-Christian religion when it is subjected to a comparative treatment with Christianity. The questions raised in such cases always happen to have been those in which Christianity has shown a special interest and in which Christian theology has demonstrated a special competence. The way to answer this objection is to raise whatever questions need to be raised from the point of view of the traditional religion, to try to discover first what questions delineate clearly the primary interest of the traditional religion and what fundamental human quests are in the traditional religion. This is what we ourselves have sought to do for Yoruba religion in this study, especially in the latter part of this thesis.

In the case of Lijadu, however, the objection is weakened in that it is exactly the material from traditional religion that he takes seriously, in this case the praise-names of Orunmila. The issues which he emphasises are specifically those which arise from the praise-names themselves, especially in so far as they appear to be similar or parallel to theological assertions which have been made about Christ. Yet, it is true that Lijadu saw in the praise-names of Orunmila only what he was looking for, namely correspondence to Christian theological ideas. He was already familiar with the distinction made by the Greeks between humanity and divinity in Jesus. He considered this to be a distinction essential in Christian theology, and he looked for it in Yoruba thought. But it is doubtful whether Yoruba babalawo, left to themselves, would came to make this distinction in the case of Orunmila or of any other being.

The risks in this approach are in fact greater on the side of Christian theology. How would a theologian decide what to appropriate for Christ, and what not to appropriate, of the attributes of Orunmila? Lijadu did not seem to have come across any praise-names of Orunmila which might be an embarrassment to apply to Jesus, yet the possibility cannot be ruled out that there are such.

And the question can be raised, if Orúnmila is selected, why not Ogún or Sango or any other Yoruba divinity? But the answer lies in the fact that Lijadu ventured to transfer only the attributes of the highest that the people know apart from God Himself, and of a highest which has been so much identified with God Himself that the distinction in personality is not always clear. This is exactly where the force of Lijadu's argument lies. Notwithstanding the fact that, from the Christian point of view, there are inadequate, or even erroneous, conceptions in some parts of Yoruba religion, there are parts of it in which God has not left Himself without witness. Lijadu therefore challenges us to the recognition that Yoruba religion containes theological conceptions which can worthily be made the starting-points for the indigenisation of Christian theology. To him, the risks which are inherent in the approach are worth taking.(31)

Yet, to use Orunmila myths to explain the person of Christ raises some Bultmannian questions today. The contention of Bultmann is that the record in the New Testament is already heavily clothed in the myths of the period when it was written, and that it becomes necessary to demythologise the accounts so that the gospel can be properly understood by modern man. Does this permit us the use of some other ancient myths even if they are found in the passing culture of a particular people? The answer is 'yes'. For Lijadu, it was not a passing culture he was dealing with. The myths he used were vigorous parts of the living culture and religion of the people in his day. In a sense, it may even be said that Lijadu in his assumptions anticipated Bultmann. He was positively demythologizing by remythologizing into a cultural tradition which was alive for the people for whom he wrote. Lijadu would not hesitate to agree that myths as symbols are disposable. The myths of one particular generation have to give way to the myths of another generation. The process of demythologization has no end. For Lijadu, the use of

---

(31). The risks in this approach are illustrated some twenty-five years later in the writing of Fagbenro-Beyioku who is discussed above.

Orúnmilà myths was to be the beginning of a ~~process~~ of ~~demythologization~~ which is necessary if Christianity has to take root in Yorubaland. Once Yoruba theology has been thoroughly indigenized through the use of Orúnmilà myths, it will surely have to be de-mythologized later whenever Orúnmilà myths in themselves become a stumbling-block to true understanding. For Lijadu, the role to be played by that mythologization into Orunmila was to persuade the Yoruba that Christianity was not at all a White Man's Religion fostered by imperialistic interests or maintained as an agent of neo-colonialism. As such, the role was a passing one, and the continuation of such formulation of the Christian faith would depend on the extent to which the people themselves retained such myths as part and parcel of their culture and living experience.

In any case, there are so many varied senses in which the myth is understood in modern scholarship or interpreted by anthoropologists, philosophers and theologians. In the context of Lijadu, briefly stated, the mythological is taken as a prevision of that which is to come. Once the mythological is historically realised, as it has been in the case of Jesus Christ, the mythical figure gives place to the historical, except as a point of analogy. This distinction between prevision and analogy has to be made in understanding theories of the myth as explanation. The historical draws the prevision into itself, but the myth as an analogy remains. Bultmann's concept of the mythical relates primarily to that which is used as a symbol, not to that which is used in the sense of prevision.

Having thus discussed the justification for Lijadu's theological method, it remains to make some further comments on the contents of that theology. Firstly, we note that Lijadu's Christology is a Christology "from above".(32) In at least two senses the concept of "from above" is the pivotal idea in his theological system.

---

(32). This expression has been borrowed from Wolfhart Pannenberg; but we are extending the meaning in describing Lijadu's theology here.

Firstly, he started from the divinity of Jesus rather than from His humanity. The divinity is presupposed. So also with the doctrine of the Trinity. Lijadu did not consider it necessary to stop and prove either of them. Once these assumptions or rather axioms are accepted, the question posed then becomes, for him, one of establishing a relationship between the divine God-man Jesus of the New Testament and the cultic figure of Orunmila. It must be remembered that Orunmila is believed in Ifa myths to be one who has come from heaven, and to whom God has given the authority and responsibility for a wise ordering of things on earth. This fact of Orunmila having come from heaven then provides the main connecting link and becomes a second sense in which we can describe his Christology as a Christology "from above".

We have to admit the appropriateness of a Christology "from above" as a starting-point for the task which Lijadu has set himself of persuading Yoruba men of traditional religion that Jesus of Nazareth came to fulfil their highest religious expectations. These expectations are already based on some operation from above. The three-storied universe of the Yoruba permitted Yoruba Christians to accept and use without any questions or hesitations the Katabasis-anabasis figure which in the New Testament such a conception of the universe makes possible. To the Yoruba, spirits and divinities from above and from below constantly invade our earth. The Orisa came down from heaven in any case, all of them, 401 or 4096 of them as the case may be, including the irunmale who are spoken of sometimes as having come from above and sometimes from the ground. Early Yoruba-Christian hymns accepted the existence of, and referred to the behaviour of, these imale, irunmale and igba imale. So, for the Yoruba, there has been so much coming and going between heaven or the realm above and the earth that it was not surprising any longer to hear that someone else has just come from above.

Significantly enough, it is a Good Friday hymn which has the verse:

Gbogbo irunmale
Ati igba 'male
Ti a nbo n'ile Keferi,
Ko yago fun Jesu.

The hymn calls on "all the nether spirits, two or four hundred of them as the case may be, which are worshipped in Gentile land, (to) give way to Jesus" and stop their activities, knowing, as they must do, that Christ is present in Yorubaland.

Secondly, if we are genuinely to apply the images of Orunmila to Jesus, then we must take the historical factor in the person and work of Jesus seriously. By this we mean that among the praise-names of Orunmila, there are those which appropriately applied to the post-Resurrection Christ. We should expect as well to find those which do not apply at all. The standard of judgement must be found in this historical Jesus and what the Bible says about Him. Since Jesus Christ is the revelation of God to man, whatever image we use of Him must be worthy of God, worthy of the Perfect One than whom there is no greater.

But the real value of using Orunmila's praise-names is to assert the relevance and belongingness to the Yoruba of Jesus and the virtues of His Cross. Once that is established, the details of the praise-names, their exegesis and the critical and cautious use of the same belong to the realm and processes of Yoruba theological reflection. A field for indigenous theological activity is immediately established, and the way opens into a creative future. In transferring the praise-names of Orunmila to Jesus, Lijadu did not mean to suggest that the Yoruba under-standing of Jesus is necessarily exhausted by activities and qualities previously attributed in traditional religion to Orunmila. If we may borrow the words ofIsaac Watts, Lijadu was only saying:

"Jesus is worthy to receive
Honour and praise divine,
And glory more than we can give
Be, Lord, for ever Thine"(33)

He would say that the praises we have sung of Orunmila really belong by right to Jeus, yet the praise of Jesus is not confined to these of Orunmila "Glory more than we can give" in addition belongs to Him.

(d) And the Christ of faith is for all nations.

The contention of Osiga and others that Jesus is the culture hero of the Jews who accepted Him has a christological implication which fits in very well with the re-discovery by New Testament scholars that the Jesus of History has to be related to the Jesus of faith. The New Testament interpretations of Klausner (1925), R. Eislen (1931), S.G.F. Brandon (1957, 1967) variously contend that the Jesus of history can be seen in a sense as the cultural hero of the Jews who accepted Him. For, after all, the Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew, born of Jewish parents in a Jewish village, who fulfilled Jewish Law according to His own light and was put to death according to Jewish Law for having contravened part of that very Law.

The question for indigenization of the Christian Gospel then becomes precisely one of relating this veritable Jesus of Jewish history to the Christ of universal faith through the medium of each living cultural system. In the case of Yoruba, it becomes one of seeing in this manifestation of the historic Jesus the "Christ" of faith whose prevision was granted by God to the Yoruba in Orunmila just as that prevision was similarly granted to the Jews in their expectation of one like Moses the Law giver or David the King or "the Prophet". The real christological importance lies in the testimony that this Jesus of Jewish history has been of so much value

---

(33). Methodist Hymn Book, No. 85.

that He cannot be left merely as a hero of Jewish culture, but that He belongs to Yoruba culture too in that He <u>has</u> transformed our lot.

A universal dimension is established for Jesus by such praise-names as "the Light of the world", "the King of the world", "the Bread of Life", "the Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the world", "the second Adam". This requires that He must be seen against the background and within the context of the darkness of every particular place, the social structure of every people, the specific felt hunger of every particular age and land, the actual sins of real people wherever they may be found, and the particular manner in which a people may have felt that they have come to share in the common Adamic lot. To claim Jesus is a people's way of testifying that they have a share in the common lot of humanity. The suggestion that the Old Testament might then be felt dispensable, as Osiga contended, is not justified; for no history, no culture, no social expectation and anticipation can take the place of the Old Testament in its paradigmatic role in Christian Theology. The Jews who explained the Christ of faith were the first to look back and relate that Christ to the history, saga and myths, the hopes and fears of their people. Others may follow. The first Jewish Christians and other early converts to the Christian faith have done such a thorough job with the Old Testament in relation to the Christ who was actually born a Jew that the record has to be kept at least for its paradigmatic relevance.

The apostolic interpretation cast the mind's eye back and spoke of the pre-existent or rather pre-historic Christ. This became possible mainly by relating the Jesus of History to the pre-incarnation religious hopes and conceptions of the people in whose thought-forms the interpretation was being made. Thus, we have first the Christ of faith of those Jews who saw the Jesus of history as the fulfilment of the Old Testament Jewish Messianic expectation, then of those Greeks and Hellenists who saw Him as the true Logos, and of the Saxons and

Scandinavians who took Him as the Sol Invictus and Saint Nicholas of the people's vision. In each case, they have related to their own religious past the Jesus with whose Resurrection power they have come in contact.

Just as no one can experience the Christ of faith by proxy, so no nation can be said to have truly satisfied the christological challenge of today except they have taken the trouble deliberately to relate the Jesus of History who lies behind their faith to the religious myths and anticipations of their land as other people have done.

It might be noted that the Yoruba framing of the theological problem of a White Man's Religion was based on a number of ethnological misconceptions. It was thought that the Jews of the Old Testament were white, that they were Caucasian like the Europeans who came to preach Jesus Christ in Africa, or even that the Jews of the Old Testament were Christians since their stories were related in what is now known as the Scripture of the Christians.

It is difficult to imagine a proper treatment of the subject for the Yoruba Church, or an adequate solution to the problem, which would not include at the start clearing up this ethnological tangle and also explaining the significance of the B.C./A.D. calendar.

New Testament schclarship today, through form-criticism and historical criticism, has discovered the necessity and importance of strictly identifying strands of thought belonging to Judaic Jewish Christians, Hellenistic Jewish Christians, Graeco-Roman Gentiles, and other Gentile converts to Christianity.(34) This is helpful for those who have to relate their study of early Christology to the need for an indeginized Christology.

---

(34). We note especially the treatment of early Christian History in general and of early Christology in particular in relation to specific social and intellectual backgrounds in the following; Richard N. Langenecker, The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity SCM Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series no. 17, London, 1970; A.D. Nook, Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Background Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1964 (Part I published in 1928 Part III in 1952); R.M. Grant, Gnosticism and Early Christianity. Revised edition, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1959, 1966; J.I. Sanders, The New Testament Christological Hymns: Their Historical Religious Background, Cambridge University Press, 1971; F.F. Bruce, Jesus and Christian Origins outside the New Testament, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1974.

VI. PRAGMATIC TOOLS OF EXISTENTIALISM

"A man in Christ, a theologian, who changes his strategy finds himself saying things he has not said before, without neccesarily repudiating his unspoken conviction. For Paul in Athens there was no reason to preach Christology or justification by faith alone. There were other questions at stake".

C. J. Bleeker, (1966), p. 17

"It is impossible here even to sketch a Christology. But I am not trying to give a substantive account of faith in Christ. My aim is to outline a formal structure of religious faith, including the faith of Christians, which allows for religious plurality. From that standpoint it seems possible to present Jesus Christ as the symbolic centre for Christian faith under four headings: person, event, presence, word".

Charles Davis (1970), p. 124.

VI. PRAGMATIC TOOLS OF EXISTENTIALISM

1. TO KNOW CHRIST IS TO KNOW HIS BENEFITS

In this chapter, we shall indicate how Yoruba Christians, sometimes deliberately and at other times unconsciously, have found alternatives which could be defended biblically or in other ways justified as christian substitutes for the existential tools which they first found available to them in Ifá system.

What Melanthon wrote, in the first edition of his Loci Communes in 1521, against the christology of the Schoolmen could be quoted by the Yoruba Zionists against the christology of Yoruba Ethiopians: "To know Christ is to know his benefits, not as they teach, to contemplate his nature and the modes of his incarnation"(1). The christology of the Zionists is different in type from that which we have just examined in the last chapter. It is striking that the Ethiopians who wanted to indigenize chose to concentrate on an understanding of Christianity as Isin. The Zionists, on the other hand, worked with the felt need for Christianity to develop elements which would make it fit into the Oro-concept of religion. At the same time, however, what later came into full bloom among the Zionists as an exploration of "the benefits of Christ" was already adumbrated among the Ethiopians themselves. However, they did not pursue it with the same seal as they pursued their intellectualized christology or with the same devotion as the Zionists pursued their explorations of the implications of faith in Christ for the existential need of the individual. The socio-existential approach which is germane to the traditional religion is what the Aládurà and other Zionists ultimately adopted.

We should note at this point the three "benefits of Christ"* highlighted in Sydney Cave's discussion of the quotation from Melanchton. "This faith in the benevolence or mercy of God first brings peace to the heart and then enkindles gratitude to God so that we freely and gladly fulfil the law". Peace, Gratitude, Free

*The use of this phrase was first suggested in the last three paragraphs of Chapter II above.

(1) Philip Melanchthon, Loci Communes, Plitt-Kolde edition, 1900, quoted in Sydney Cave, The Christian Estimate of Man, Duckworth, London, 1944, pp. 141f.

and glad fulfilment of the Law are the benefits of Christ. By way of anticipation, these might be compared with what the "pragmatic tools of existentialism" in Ifa are intended to bring.

From the early days of the coming of Christianity to Yorubaland, converts were exhorted to discard or abandon their idols and not to have anything again to do with native medicine and other devices which had given a sense of security in the uncertainties of life. But, when a Christian feels insecure or perplexed and anxious, what is he expected to do? The injunction to "trust and obey" coupled with the provision of "houses of refuge", settlements or colonies for believers, like the Wasimi in Abeokuta and Kudeti in Ibadan, seem to have been sufficient, so long as the community of believers kept together to strengthen one another. But for many of them, as time went on, "trust and obey" no longer seemed to supply enough answer to the questions "what shall I do?" where "doing" in traditional society meant some use of medicine or rituals or homeopathic charms.

Bishop James Johnson, on his way back from England after his consecration, wrote from Sierra-Leone to CMS.(2) In a long and involved sentence, he observed: "Although there is much ministerial complaint about such superstitious heathen usages among professing Christians as cooking for twin children and for the dead, which in Yoruba is an act of worship to the god of twin births and the spirits of deceased ancestors, the observance of wakes for several days together where and when a death occurs and an irreverent use of such occasions of christian hymns and songs, the use of heathen charms for protection against evil and for securing prosperity, and all these among a people who, unlike their parents and grandparents who had been born and bred in heathenism, had been born in a christian community and been taught of Christ from the earliest days, and although resort to the exercise of discipline to check and prevent the growth of immorality is perhaps sometimes frequent, yet it is

---

2. James Johnson's letter now under reference is 1900/150 in CMS Archives. Letter dated Nov. 3, 1900.

evident that there are many who are on the Lord's side, and who have been born of the Spirit". He spoke of more young people then in the Yoruba Mission "marrying", and hoped everywhere for "more intelligent comprehension of marital pledges and of the responsibilities mutually undertaken and more prayerful effort to meet them."

This problem of the practice of 'country fashion' hand in hand with a profession of the Christian faith has persisted until today. The 1966 Military Coup in Nigeria led to the discovery that the houses of some politicians who were christians contained special rooms reserved for storing charms, amulets and "medicines" for personal protection, for gaining popularity and for securing general prosperity. At the anti-corruption tribunals which followed the Coûp, many of the people being probed were known to have carried with them "medicines" to induce the favour of the Judges and Chairmen of tribunals and to turn the course of justice mechanically in their favour. Instructions given to policemen on duty to search for and remove such charms carried the suggestion that those who gave the instructions believed that the charms could have some effect and that they were possibly frightened of such effects.

In the bookshops and on the side streets, printed booklets are widely offered for sale on how to prepare such charms. Most of those who buy such booklets for use would not be Àlàdúrà Christians for whom alternative religious and allegedly Christian devices are available. Because Christians of other Churches do not have such alternatives to help them in the anxieties and perplexities which afflict most people in contemporary African societies, they form the majority of those who buy such booklets.

This situation points to the need for the longer established Churches in Yorubaland to make a careful study of the actuality of faith for their members for whom 'trust and obey' needed to be ritualized or supplemented, with special reference to their christian response in the time of tensions and adversities. We shall

now proceed to analyse the pragmatic tools of existentialism to which attention has been called in our discussion on the structure of myths and rituals and note what adaptation they underwent under Christian influence during the period under review.

2. DIVINATION

The place of divination in the Ifa system has been established in Chapter two of this thesis above. Besides, there is ample literature on the Ifa divinatory process, the function of the babalawo (diviner), and the interpretation of the Odu-myth paradigms(3). Though it has not been generally recognized that Yoruba religion knows of several other methods of divination outside that which is connected with Orunmila and Ifa, Osun, for example, has its own divinatory method. So also has Sango and other cults. While Ifa uses palm-nuts, other cults use either cowries or kola-nuts or other seeds.

a. Divination and the Quests

The origin of divination, as recounted in a Yoruba myth, lies in the need of the gods for food and a stratagem proposed by Esu, the complex character representing the messenger, the trickster, the principles of uncertainty, confusion and disorder, mischievous wisdom, persuasion and strategy. The gods were hungry, so the story says.(4) Every possible device attempted failed to yield satisfactory

---

3. Most writers on Ifa have wrongly treated it as if it were simply a system of divination. This means that there is ample literature on its divinatory process. The most significant include E.G. Parrinder, West African Religion, revised and enlarged 1961, pp. 137-148; Raymond Prince, Ifá, Yoruba Divination and Sacrifice, Ibadan 1964; Raymond Prince and Frank Speed, a Film on Ifá Divination, produced for the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 1962; W. Bascom, Ifá Divination, Communications Between Gods and Men in West Africa, Indiana, 1969; Judith Gleasen, A Recitation of Ifá, Oracle of the Yoruba, Grossman Publishers, New York, 1963; P. Morton-Williams, "The Mode of Divination", Africa, 1966, p. 406f.

4. Judith Gleason, Orisha....., 1971, pp. 98f.

result. What could have been an unfailing source of supply for the gods was sacrifice to the gods. But this the earth-dwellers were not willing to make. Why? It was because of the motives and sanctions which previously lay behind every act of sacrifice. People had sacrificed because the god of small-pox terrified them into submission; but the disease at the same time rendered them so weak and discouraged with life that they could no longer stir themselves to offer food to the gods. Sango was the god of thunder and lightning. It was his practice to rain thunder-bolts upon men, strike down their crops and set fire to their houses, in consequence of which men used to crawl before him in terror and offer him food for placation. But they soon rebelled against his tyranny. The gods of professional guilds limited the number of the employed; and the unemployed, disillusioned with life, simply waited for Death and did not bother to feed the gods.

Esu then went to visit Yemoja, the mother of water. It was Yemoja, the mother of all the orisa who counselled them: "You are surprised that men no longer fear death? Why don't you try giving them things to yearn for, nurture in them a quest for life; then they will be disposed to bring the sacrifice of gratitude, sacrifice for the joy of living". The problem for the messenger of the gods was then how to implement this directive. Esu decided to go to Orunmila who was reputed for his sagacity. On the direction of Orunmila, Esu went to the four corners of the earth to bring the symbolic objects the interpretation of which would provide the clue to the enigma. What Esu brought back was a collection of palm fronds, palm kernels and palm nuts.

"Palm-fronds are used to repair a thatched roof when there is a leak; we are now moving towards the way of handling the situation when things go wrong. A kernel has to be broken to get to what is inside; our solution lies in the search for meaning and the interpretation of ideas. The nut which comes from inside a kernel becomes

food; so will be the result of the enterprise we undertake under this symbolism, it will provide food for men and the gods. Palm kernels shall be the instrument for the operation". It was with such words that Oduduwa started to devise the use of sixteen palm kernels for divination. The permutation of the results of the throws of the kernels gradually came to be associated with stories which became paradigms to be interpreted and applied to life situations and to the anxieties which arise from the things which men desire and long for.

This story shows that the philosophers of Yoruba Ifa myths have long rejected the theory that "fear makes the gods" with the religious practices based upon it. Divination as an element in religious behaviour is related in Yoruba wisdom to man's quests in life and the existential situation of man in society. Yoruba religion is unashamedly this-worldly; and this inheritance was unhesitatingly carried into Christianity by the Yoruba who became converted to it. There are many Yoruba songs and anecdotes which identify the primary needs of man and establish precedence and priorities among the items so listed. The three main quests of life emphasised in Yoruba religion are riches, children and health. There are several arguments and counter-arguments as to which of these three is supreme.(5) Even when it has been agreed that the listing given here, say, is in the ascending order and that health is more highly valued than the others, it is at the same time acknowledged that man often pursues wealth which may be regarded as the lowest on the scale of indispensability.

It is curious that in the early years of the second half-century of Christianity among the Yoruba, in 1899 to be precise, CMS Bookshops in Lagos published a Church Hymnary which included the following hymn:(6)

---

5. Different arguments are proffered in the songs of popular singers e.g. Sunny Àdé, Dèlé Ojó, and Haruna Ìshòla. See Story No. 11 in Appendix II.

6. Orin Mimo, Lagos, 1899: Hymn No. 22 under the heading "Ife Da"? (Where is Love?)

Ohun meta l'eda nwá n'nú aiye
Eda nw'owo, eda nw'omo;
Eda nw'atubotan aiye o;
Oju eda fo s'alafia;
Jesu l'o wa la'ju eda Re;
Jesu l'Oba Oninure;
On l'Olorun pe l'Omo;
Jesù l'ona s'alafia;
Jesù ni Iye eda Re
Jesù l'otito èda Rè
Ewa fe'nu k'Omo l'enu;
Omo Olorun l'O wa gb'aiye là
K'on ma bā binu si yin; K'e ma bā segbe l'ona yin.
Ibukun ni f'oluwa re
T'o gbékele Omo Olorun;
E jowo wa gbā 'bukun yi.
K'okan yin ko ma segbé.

It translates roughly thus: "Three things man searches for in life, they are money, child-bearing and well-being in one's life. But man is blind to real well-being. Jesus has come to open man's eyes, Jesus the well-disposed King, Whom God has called His Son; He is the way to true well-being, He is the life of His creatures, He is the Truth for His creatures. Please come and kiss the Son: He who comes the world to save. Come, lest His wrath is directed against you, lest you perish on your way. Blessed is the man who trusts the Son of God. Please come to have this blessing, so that your soul may not perish."

The Christian faith as preached from the first set its face against the this-worldly outlook of Yoruba religion. What was substituted for it was a soul-salvation religion. Yearning for soul-salvation does not commend divination as does the yearning for riches, children and health. The extent to which the substitution of one for the other has been fully accepted can be measured by the extent to which the believers have done away with divination in any form.

b. Divination and Uncertainty.

One of the stanzas of an Odu-myth says: "One day is not necessarily like another. Tomorrow may not be as today. Hence a babalawo casts the Ifa nuts day after day" (a variant reading has 'every fifth day of a five-day week'). This shows that the element of predicting the future is not the only or predominant feature in Ifa divination. In the Ifa context, divination is not necessarily prediction or fortelling. It is a revelation, an effort to decipher the 'works' or operations which make any particular situation. It is intended to make a person aware of the interplay of forces which determines for that person the circumstances in which he lives.

Yoruba Traditional Religion incorporates itself in a divinatory ritual system and conveys a divinatory attitude. A divinatory attitude is that which is deeply conscious of the presence of the unknown, or the risk of having to deal with, or being under the influence of, the unknown. It is that which is in search of the mysterious, seeking to control or at least be on the right side of the forces which operate within the unknown. It is that which expects always that at any time the supernatural may break through with a display of new features which may require from man new adjustments.

We propose then that the definition of Yoruba Traditional Religion has to accept this angle of divination and its implications in terms of the unknown while recognizing at the same time that divination is only the beginning of a series of ritual processes. Starting from Paul Tillich's definition of religion as ultimate concern, it is possible for us in the present context to extend the definition to say that religion is the beliefs, values, behaviour and practices by which an individual or a community seek both to reassure themselves and to ensure that the forces at work in the universe are directed ultimately to their common human good.

c. New Forms of Divination.

The difference between a Religion and a mere divinatory system was brought into prominence with the establishment of the Ijo Orunmila Adulawo and similar sects. These groups are more conscious of the Isin-concept of religion which they inherited from Christianity and Islam. But there is no consultation or divination in the public worship of the Ijo. Selection of passages for Sunday reading in public worship is influenced by Christian practice. Although an Odu would be taken from the collection of myths called Odu Mimo (named Holy Odu, after the Holy Bible), no divination ever takes place to determine which Odu is to be considered appropriate for any particular occasion. The choice is made at the discretion of the leader of the worship or the preacher. Divination does not feature in the public worship of Ijo Orunmila Adulawo, but individual members are not discouraged from consulting the Ifa oracle privately for their own guidance or to approach a babalawo to consult for them. More often than not, they do. But this is not confined to the Ijo Orunmila Adulawo. Those who do not go to the babalawo go to the Aladura seers, called wolí "prophets". This tendency has been there from the earliest days of Christianity among the Yoruba.

It becomes necessary at this point to illustrate the alternative forms of expression which the divinatory attitude has found during the period under review among Christians who have felt constrained to resort to Ifa divination or any of the other methods associated with Yoruba traditional religion. Our contention is that the early Yoruba Christians did not see anything particularly wrong or un-christian in divination as such. What they could no longer bring themselves to do was to go to the Ifa priest for consultation.

The journals of E.M. Lijadu offer us the first illustration that conversion to Christianity does not necessarily make the people less prone to the divinatory attitude, but it is rather incorporated into methods of evangelism used to show the validity and excellence

of the new faith over those it came to supplant. Sortes Biblicum has been known before in the history of the Church in Europe(7) but no one needs to have taught E.M. Lijadu or the village chiefs to use it. Nevertheless, they did. The Ọ̀bà of Akure in the Ondo area was noted as one who had the practice of having his own copy of the New Testament brought in to him by an attendant. From it he would select a passage at random to be read and expounded to him as the message or oracle for the day. On May 7, 1898, E.M. Lijadu visited the Ọ̀bà. The passage so selected was Acts 7, of which Lijadu expounded the first six verses on the call of 'the God of our fathers' to Abraham to whom He promised an inheritance. Adherents of the Ifá system were people of the sixteen palm-nuts; Christians were people of the Book. They both treated their religious symbol as an instrument for divination.

From the attitude of the Akure Chief to the practice of divining with a sheet of paper, on which sixteen questions have been printed with a piece of wool tagged on to each question, is an easy transition. And this was what "Dr." Odumosu of Ijebu-Ode provided for Christians as a more practical divinatory instrument, using again the printed page which was a striking symbol of the new faith.(8) The sixteen questions corresponded with the sixteen palm-nuts of the Ifá system. And, as if to make sure that the correspondence was not missed, the sign of each of the sixteen Odu was printed over again one or other question on the page.

The page with sixteen questions and wool tags was part of J. Odumosu's Iwe Itumo Ala. The book, as the title shows, is in fact a Dream Book. The dream element will be discussed later. It is better noted here that the book has two parts to it, though not clearly distinguished as such. The second part covers pages 72-118, parts of which are unobstrusively but variously headed as Iwe Ilana

7. James Hastings (ed.), Encyclopeadia of Religion and Ethics, articles on "Christian Divination".

8. J. Odumosu, Iwe Itumo Ala, Printed by F. X. Le Roux & Gie, Rue des-Hallebardes, 34, Strabourg, n.d.

Ibere (A Book on a divinatory pattern), Iwe Ibere (A book of divination by Questions), Iwe Itumo Ibere (A Glossary of Answers to the Questions)and Iwe Itumo Ami (A Glossary of Omens and their Meanings), in a way which suggests that the second part of the book itself has several sections. The divination pattern which forms the first section is one by which the answer to an enquiry can be deduced from four sets of strokes on a piece of paper checked to see whether each set totalled up to an odd or an even number. Once again, the recording of the results is done with the use of the same symbols which in the Ifa system the babalawo (diviner) marks upon his divining board. So, every device led to the assumption that the Iwe Itumo Ala divinatory methods were the Christian alternatives to Ifá, again offered in a book supplementary to the Bible.

To establish a christian authenticity for the ideas in this second part of the book, an introductory essay was included. The argument started from Adam in the Garden of Eden, his constant need for an awareness of the counsels of God, and God's provision for this in the visits to Adam in the cool of the day. Then followed some twenty-four references in the Old and New Testaments where use was made of lot-casting for divination. The third line of justification was the argument that Jesus spoke most of the time in parables and it was necessary to have help to discover the esoteric meaning of the "proverbs" of life as communicated to us through signs and omens.

We return now to the first part of the book Iwe Itumo Ala and its offer of a guide for the interpretation of dreams. Here too an attempt was made to justify a Christian's dependence on the guidance and wisdom obtainable through dreams. The introductory essay interpreted the origin of dreams generally as a visitation of spirits just as friends and relatives come to visit us to counsel us and to share in our joys during any festivities, or in our sorrows during times of depression or sorrow. Dreams are night appearances of

spirit-counsellors. Here too, some twenty-four passages, mostly from the Old Testament, were quoted as references indicating the dependence of Bible personalities on guidance through dreams. We have no direct indication to ascertain whether this introductory essay was an original piece of Odumosu's, or whether it was translated from an external text. Nevertheless, we assume that it was the former since the Yoruba expressions used in the essay sound so authentic, unlike the stiffness and strangeness of some of the translated portions.

Thus assured of Biblical sanction for the use of dreams as a means of explanation, prediction and guidance, many Christians have resorted to it where formerly they would have consulted a diviner. Not a few village Christians have made early morning calls on literate local church elders who possessed copies of Iwe Ala to consult them on the interpretation of dreams which have led to anxiety: or to enquire as to what "the book with the wool tags" would say on some practical issues which could be expressed as a version of one or other of the sixteen given questions. Many such have testified that the answer given has set their minds at rest and given them an indication of the proper action for particular moments of crisis. The popularity of dream interpretation in a religious context has led to some church workers producing smaller versions of Odumosu's work. One such was published by the Rev. Chief S. O. Bada of Saki.(9)

So much were dreams desired and craved for as a means of knowing the will of God that Yoruba Christians started to learn methods of inducing interpretable dreams. Special bed-time prayers were in course of time suggested with the assurance that dreams would accompny the sleep. Such prayers might be used in association with special psalms named for the purpose or be preceded with fasting.

---

9. D. O. Epega, Iwe Ifa ati Itumo Ala, Lagos,. 1937. Rev. Chief S. O. Bada, Iwé Ogbon Ijinlè, Saki n.d.

In consequence of the explanation of a dream as a visitation by a spirit, Odumosu added to the arguments in the introductory essay an exhortation to purity of heart and life, which reads in Yoruba as "whiteness of the inside", inu-funfun. Even in those days before the Aladura, it has been reported, Christians desiring that they be visited by the spirits in their dreams had to sleep in white bed-clothes, not the traditional indigo, or light grey.

The Yoruba are caught in seeking to know the unknown and unfamiliar which is believed to be fraught with danger because it deals with the question of power which is being controlled from outside man. Man wants to get this power on his side, or to get the powers which control the power to be on his side. He wants to be able himself to control the power. The investigation and process of deciphering which is known as divination is not simply for the sake of knowledge and understanding. Knowledge is supposed to lead to action, to greater control. Hence the ritual process which begins with divination goes on to medicine, incantation, formal rites and personal ethical behaviour.

3. MEDICINE

The arrival of the first CMS medical missionary in Nigeria in 1861 lies outside our period. But what started then as an isolated case later became a delibrate policy. In 1893 the CMS convened a meeting in England of doctors who were interested in the work of the Mission. It was there decided to set up a College named after Livingstone "for the instruction of foreign missionaries in the elements of practical medicine". The nature and treatment of tropical diseases featured among other subjects taught in the institution and the practical value very soon started to be realized through the medicine chests, dispensaries and maternity hospitals of different missionaries and their missions in West Africa.(10)

---

10. See C. C. Ifemasia, in West African Religion, Nsukka, No. 12, July, 1972 p.9. Schram, Medical Missions in Nigeria, Ibadan, 1972.

From a religious, apart from an anthropological, psychological or medical point of view, it is time that African medicine in general and Yoruba medicine in particular be systematically analysed and studied in its own right. Yoruba traditional religion is more truly understood when looked at in the context of Yoruba medicine.

Yoruba religion is so much bound up with Yoruba medicine that it cannot be otherwise. Yoruba ontology, which is basic to Yoruba religion and cultism, is integrally bound up with Yoruba medicinal ideas. The orisa can be spoken of as concretizations and embodiments of medicinal powers. A proper study of Yoruba medicine therefore ought to take place as an inter-disciplinary project. The theologian, the anthropological and sociological student of the scientific study of religion, the medical specialist and pharmacologist, the psychiatrist, the philologist, the student of oral tradition and comparative literature, and the musician, all have a contribution to make to one another's near adequate understanding of Yoruba medicine and religion. This is the reason for the increasing interest from many sides in the study of the Ifa corpus to which reference has been made earlier.(11) But in spite of this evident

---

11. When Fela Sowande was a research professor in the University of Ibadan he organised a series of lectures on "Background to African Musicology". Rev. D. O. Epega (Jnr.) delivered a paper in this series on Ifa. Fela Sowande's own interest which led to the publication of a booklet on Ifa was stimulated by his concern in music. Interest in Ifa among Classicists is represented in Olanipekun Esan, "The Delphic and Ifa Oracles" published in Nigeria and the Classics: Proceedings of the 2nd Conference on Classics, Ibadan, 1958. From the side of Folklore and Theatre, there is J. A. Adedeji's paper on "The Origin of the Yoruba Masque Theatre: The Use of Ifa Divination Corpus as Historical Evidence", African Notes, Bulletin of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, 6: 1, 1970, pp. 70ff. The interest from Oral Literature and History combined is expressed in the chapter contributed by Wande Abimbola on "The Literature of the Ifa Cult" in S. O. Biobaku (ed.) Sources of Yoruba History, Oxford, 1973, pp. 41-62. Mention needs to be made also of psychiatry represented by Raymond Prince's Ifa: Yoruba Divination and Sacrifice, University of Ibadan, 1962, and references in his paper on "Indigenous Yoruba Psychiatry" in Ari Kiev (ed.) Magic, Faith and Healing, Collier-Macmillan, London 1965, pp. 84-120.

interest in Ifa from different points of view, the study of Ifa as medicine has yet to be done. All we can do here is to open up the discussion.

a. Concept, Terminology and Practitioners

Belief in the power of medicine is fundamental in Yoruba life. Even today most small towns and villages still have no hospitals and other medical facilities. Everyone in earlier times had to depend on his or other people's knowledge of the use of local herbs for all curative purposes. This created the need for everyone to have a basic knowledge of the powers of local leaves. The way for an old village women to worm her way into the heart of any young catechist, teacher or pastor who had come to live in the village and from whom she wished to borrow money, was for her to boast her knowledge of herbs and her readiness to place her knowledge at the disposal of those to whom she would be favourably disposed. One mark of personal maturity and growth into adulthood was the extent of one's knowledge of the names and potency of local leaves. School education inhibited this process of learning. The child who was able to follow his father to the farm day after day would stand the chance of being told in casual informal sessions about the names of particular leaves, what they could be used for and the skill one had to exercise in the use of such or particular other leaves. Though most people learnt about the use of leaves for medicinal purposes, yet a professional class of herbalists existed and still exists in Yoruba society.(12)

In an ontological sense, Oogun or medicine is the power or life-force which resides in things, in plants and parts of animals, in shapes and forms, in colours and words. It is the combination of appropriate names and forms with ideas, objects, movements, situations and events. Sometimes, it is power inherent in things, at other times it is power infused into things. Infusion of power takes place

12. Una Maclean, Magical Medicine: A Nigeria Case-Study, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, London, 1971, pp. 74-88.

sometimes by words spoken, symbols inscribed or arranged in a specific order, and sometimes by a ritual washing of things with prescribed preparations, But it is all taken as part of the natural ordering of things.

It is necessary at this stage to discuss the question of terminology as it is not easy to find the right equivalent in English for the Yoruba word Òògùn which is usually rendered "medicine" or even "magic". The Yoruba word Òògùn stands for so many different things that the English word "medicine" is not an adequate translation. The fact is that the word "medicine" covers only a tiny part of the connotation of the Yoruba Òògùn. Although the Yoruba use the word for preparations intended for therapeutic purposes, nevertheless the word is used in various other ways where curative intentions for human ailments are not present. The Yoruba òògùn-concept embraces variously therapeutic medicine, poisón, anti-sorcery devices, measures to ward off spirits and ghosts, psychological techniques to control the mind of another person, and many other things. Since there is no single English word to cover all these ideas, and since the words, magic, charms or fetich, which have been used before, have now been found to be either inadequate or even pejorative, we shall retain the word medicine on the understanding that it is used here to carry the much wider sense of the Yoruba òògùn.

Although a classification of medicines according to use is easy, being primarily a simple division into those which are therapeutic and those which are non-therapeutic, the distinction which is established in Yoruba vocabulary is chiefly according to the methods used in the preparation of the medicine. Curative preparations are generally made of leaves, roots or barks or seeds of plants. As such, all curative medicines are frequently called by a word which literally translates as "the roots of trees", ẹ̀gbòogi. Though there are therapeutic medicines in which elements other than plant parts are used, like minerals or sometimes parts of birds and animals, yet

all therapeutic medicines are called egboogi as if they are all made from the roots of trees. In contrast, all other sorts of concoctions and mixtures are called oogun, including European healing medicine.

The Babalawo believes there is a medicine for everything. There is medicine for healing diseases. There is medicine for long life, and medicine for prolonging life. The two are said to be different. The latter means medicine so that one does not die, oogun aiku. They claim it works. It is the user who ultimately decides to terminate his own life. When the user discovers that, after all, the game is not worth the candle, when he has not enough strength even to terminate his own life, he asks someone to cut the cord or remove the ring which is the medicine. There is medicine for keeping thieves away or at bay. The daring thief who enters is kept transfixed until the owner of the property turns up. There is medicine for protecting oneself from an enemy, for returning the evil intended by the enemy to the enemy himself, for frustrating the intentions of the enemy.

There is a sense in which the Yoruba work oogun should be rendered not only with the word "medicine", but also with the word "Science", or rather with such different branches of Physical Science like Chemistry, Pharmacy, Physics, Electricity, Magnetism, etc. A tool (e.g. a cutlass, a sickle and other farm knife) may be dipped into oogun. It is then used either to cut the bark of cocoa-trees, or kolanut trees or orange trees to make the trees more productive. Oogun may be sprinkled on seed yams, maize, and beans before they are planted to make them grow well. Now that manures and fertilizers are sold by the Ministries of Agriculture, and farmers are encouraged to use them, the Yoruba name for modern chemical fertilizers is Oogun Ajile: the oogun which wakes up the soil.

It is believed that there is a type of oogun which in powder form is sprinkled on a footstep, or which in liquid form is painted on a knife used to scratch a footstep in the sand or mud. When so

used, it causes the foot of the person to whom the footstep belongs to swell up. It is easy to identify the oogun which makes crop trees more productive as a type of fertilizer, no matter how applied. But what of the oogun which when sprinkled on a footmark in mud makes the foot become diseased? The missionary suggestion that this is merely a superstitious belief and practice not open to empirical test and explanation is honestly countered by villagers who claim the belief as the only convincing explanation of some foot diseases. But no one has been known to have offered his foot for an empirical test. The explanation of the phenomenon as magic has been made either in the sense of what James Frazer has termed "sympathetic magic" or because the practice is used for harmful purposes and therefore is of the nature of "black magic". This latter simply raises the moral question in the practice and offers no explanation as to what happens.

Village community chiefs, more and more including Christians, on suspecting that some people in the community plan to use malevolent medicine, cause the village bell-ringer to announce a warning against the act. The warning includes a threat that the lineage ancestors frown upon such an act and will take revenge against any evil-doer. This warning assumes that the medicine would work. Granted that assumption, the necessary action for community leaders is moral dissuasion. Depending on how strong may be the evidence for the suspicion of an intended malevolent use of medicine, and also on whether the suspected evil-doer has any connection with the church, a public announcement is sometimes made in a church congregation that such an evil-doer is suspected. The appeal in such a case then becomes one of reminding the alleged prospective evil-doer that God sees and knows all secret things, that he abhors all evil and that the evil-doer should expect in the words of the Psalmist, that "destruction shall come upon him unawares, the net which he has hid shal catch himself".(13) Once again, no question is raised as to

13. Psalm 7: 15-16; 35: 8.

whether such a medicine could be effective or not, but religious sanctions are invoked against an evil use of the medicine.

Two personal names are formed out of oogun. One is Onisegun or alasegun, which is used for the physicians, the latter variant being more frequently used for the herbal medicine-man in the village and the former generally used primarily of the medical doctor in a modern hospital. But they both mean the same thing and bear no difference in connotation. Alasegun started as a dialect form and simply became attached to the practitioner in the local area where the dialect is more commonly used. The second personal noun, however, is oloogun, one who has oogun, as distinct from onisegun which literally means one who makes or assembles the properties for oogun. Ologun is used in an evil sense. He is the man who uses oogun for destructive purposes.

Djinns in the forests are believed to possess oogun of various kinds, by which they can make themselves invisible to man and are able to defy man or beast. A man who is believed to be versed in the knowledge of oogun and who possibly has a repertoire of them is said to "have oogun more than djinns in the forest": O l'oogun j'aroni. An oloogun is greatly feared in society. Ode a-fi-fila p'erin, ojo kan l'o ni iyin mo. "A man who is able to kill an elephant with an oogun-impregnated cap is highly respected and acclaimed only on the day of the event: soon after, the community begins to fear and dread him."

A king (oba) is the supreme embodiment of medicine. His 'head' has been strengthened with medicine and nobody dares knock his head against that of the king's, as the saying goes. Those who can prepare 'powerful medicine' do their best to get the king's attention and patronage. In fact, there are medicines which befit only a king's position. Such are the madarikan group of medicines, consisting of medicine to strengthen the king's head and heart, medicine to make him popular and give him a following, medicine to

empower his voice and even his name so that those who hear either can be frightened or filled with awe. The psychic nature of a Yoruba king is wrapped up in the power which medicine gives or strengthens. Hence the importance of the ceremonies of confinement prior to coronation and enthronement, leading on to the climax of public acclamation announcing and acknowledging the completion of the making of his psychic individuality. A moral and cosmic impropriety came to be registered against a king who after his accession still engaged in medicines of the Awure type with which he invoked blessings on himself. "After you have been made king, you still go for Awure medicines: Is it to make yourself God?" Nwon fi e j'oba, o tun ns'awure, o fe j'Olorun ni? can be a sobering prophetic warning from a babalawo to a king.

The distinction between therapeutic and non-therapeutic medicine becomes blurred in Yoruba consideration. All medicines, except poisonous and malevolent ones, contribute to a person's total well-being of which healing is only one part. The real distinction drawn therefore is between good and bad medicine, with the goodness or badness defined in terms of intention and motivational objectives.

That a babalawo believes there is a medicine for everything does not mean that he necessarily knows all the medicines. He may not even know any at all. When occasion arises for their use, divination will reveal the appropriate one. Because it takes time to memorise herbs, the babalawo concentrates on memorising the myths. Those who claim to know before hand the leaves and roots needed for different medicines are called adahunse, literally, those who rely on themselves to do something. In the sence that they depend on their own opinions and not on knowledge revealed through divination, as we noted above, they are heretics.

In a sense, medicine itself is a heresy in the Ifa system. One does not necessarily need to go to a babalawo to learn medicinal herbs and concoctions. Because medicine is popularly practised, one

can learn it from those who claim to know. In this sense it is a lay movement. Everyone does it. Yet there are recognized gradations in types of medicine, and the babalawo plays a careful mediatorial role to define, limit and control the sphere and use of medicine.

The babalawo plays this role in herbal medicine first by taking it upon himself to prescribe an additional leaf or ingredient known as Ewe Ifa beyond what a herbalist would have prescribed. What the babalawo calls Ewe Ifa (Ifa leaves) are special leaves which are the most essential ingredients of a medicinal preparation and which are specially revealed by Ifa as being of the most therapeutic value for each particular case. They may even be leaves the identification of which has to be kept secret so that no uninitiated may dare to prescribe the medicine. In most cases, the babalawo simply takes the Ewe Ifa which he has learnt in connection with each particular Odu. Whatever Odu applies to this particular patient, the Ewe Ifa of that Odu will meet his case. Of course, it so happens that the leaf, which has been known by experience in the past to have been of the most therapeutic value for a particular disease, becomes Ewe Ifa for this praticular person because his case happens to be similar to the paradigmatic one in the Odu-Ifa. Such a leaf may even be a Gbogbounse, one which effectively deals with the root cause of all types of disease.

The quality of such an Ewe Ifa sometimes rests on the fact that it has purgative properties. This is an indication that Ifa physicians recognised the special importance of getting rid of toxins and other impurities and poison from the body through the excretory system. Old men of the village would plant some ewe asunrun (Cassia alata) or of peregun (Dracaena fragrans) at the back of their houses to make the leaves easily accessible. But on no account would they wish it to be thought that they depended on the use of either as an essential part of a medicinal preparation. The bark of the baobab

tree is used for the same purpose. As such the baobah is considered as a sacred tree. When the specific quality of the Ewe Ifa is of a sedative or tranquilizing nature, it is also called Ewe Alasiwalu, which literally translates as the leaves with which to integrate or reintegrate human personality. This indicates the importance of a psychiatric element in the restoration of full health.

With some babalawo and others who depend not only on recollection but also on new revelation arising from either inspiration, or vision, or telepathy or medicinal power, new prescriptions are said to come through such revelation. In the use of Ewe Ifa, the babalawo shows that he believes that he is dealing not simply with the medicinal value of leaves. There is the conscious recognition of multi-factorial aetiology and multi-dimensional potency.

Because curative power is not confined to herbs and parts of an animal, it becomes possible for Ifa to declare at the birth of a child that the child should not be given any formal medicinal preparation at all, but depend on cold water. An Ifa or Obatala priest may have to pronounce words of incantation on the water to infuse medicinal power into it. In other cases, the Ifa directive may be that the mother should go at dawn to the brook, before speaking to any human being, and draw the water with a prayer. Such women sometimes have to carry a bell with them to warn passers-by that they are under a religio-medicinal obligation not to speak to anyone, or with the ringing of the bell repeat her prayer audibly as she goes. In either case, on arrival at the stream she has to pray: "Here I come, on behalf of my child or children (name or names) given to me under special divinatory directives with a taboo on formal medicine. May this water be charged with medicinal power; charged for stomach-ache and for dysentery, charged for healing piles and all kinds of worms. I come to do as I have been directed. May this water become medicine".

The case of Yoruba Christians of the Àládurà persuasion who depend on water only for medicinal purposes, with or without prayer, has been discussed by other investigators.(14) Sufficient it is to note here that in Yoruba traditional religion water may be used as a revealed alternative to medicine.

b. Causation and Treatment of Disease

Divination, as it has been pointed out above, is resorted to generally when things go wrong or when fear caused by the mere fact of the mysterious and unknown leads to anxiety about the future. Anxiety generally arises in relation to whatever are considered as the main quests of life. Yoruba mythology seems to suggest that health is the most essential of the quests referred to earlier. As such, illness or disease is considered to be the commonest and the most fundamental cause leading to a resort to divination. In addition, physical illness can be taken as the most apposite metaphor or typology for all human ambiguity, finitude and suffering. A study of the nature and the healing of diseases will be illuminating for dealing with other problems of life. We begin with an examination of a few Yoruba words for disease, health and healing.

There are three main words for disease, or illness and sickness. They are àìlera, àìsàn, and àrùn. The first word, Àìlera, stands for lack of strength in the body, lack of bodily well-being, general debility. The corresponding word for health is ara lile, from which the negative, àìlera, is formed.

Àìsàn is stronger than àìlera. It is lack of total well-being, not only in the physical body but also in the circumstances of life and the resultant emotions. It stands for the state of getting worse than normal rather than getting better than normal. Getting better than normal might be the general expectation for man who has prospered by the blessing of ancestors and the gods, whose head has

---

14. For example, J. D. Y. Peel op. cit., pp. 99-100, see also Òmi Iyè in his index.

been good, and whose prayers and sacrifices have been propitious. But in the case of the person who has an àìsàn, he does not have the state of improved existence and general good luck. All that can be said of him is that he has the ordinary basic state of existence, he can eke out an existence for himself; the most that can be said of him is that at least he breathes. So long as he breathes, you cannot bury him. Àìsàn is a state of extreme debility in which even ordinary breathing is found difficult and is not a pleasure. An illustration may make the connotation of Àìsàn clearer. There is a saying in which the root-word sàn is used. It goes thus: Kaka ko sàn lara Iyá Àje, o tun nfi gbogbo omo bi obinrin; Eiye nyi l'eiye, which may be paraphrased as follows: The woman referred to in the saying is a witch. That is her state of existence. If she had male children, the temptation to pass on her witchcraft could be reduced. But unfortunately for her, all her children turned out to be girls which made more witches possible. To be a witch is bad enough. To have daughters who could also be witches with one is worse still. Thus, to live in the world is difficult in itself, even without illnesses. The coming of an illness makes things worse. So an Àìsàn is a combination of lack of bodily well-being together with the other difficulties of life. The pain of Àìsàn is not only pain experienced in the body, it is also the pain of not being able to go to the farm, of not being able to meet family or social obligations, of becoming a burden on others. The corresponding Yoruba word for health is igbadun, enjoyment, or the word alafia, total well-being or peace.

Àrun is a very serious sickness, it is that which incapacitates, destroys, kills, which spreads beyond the first person attacked and is likely to kill others as well. It is that which not only causes pain and suffering but is also protracted in its afflicting power. It is that which destroys faith and hope, which ruins the very desire to live.

From these word-studies, it is clear that the Yoruba concept of disease extends beyond pain of the body and physical ill-health. But this will become more evident as we go on to examine other aspects of well-being and the causes of disease.

Alafia, the Yoruba word for good health, happens to be a loan-word, an Arabic word which has come into Yoruba through Hausa and Nupe. But, significantly enough, it is the word which is being used not only for physical well-being, but also for general well-being. It is also the word for "peace", for peace of mind, political peace and absence of warfare. It is the word used for the salutation "How are you? and How do you do?" To ask "Is it well with you?", the Yoruba man asks for the state of the person's alafia. And subsidiary questions are asked to show the range of interests and concern for the person's alafia: Do you wake well? And your wife? And your children? And members of your extended family?..... And are your horses grazing?", this last being the equivalent of the modern "And how is the car doing?" The significant thing is that the village Yorubaman takes animal well-being as part of the condition for a person's alafia.

The treatment of the three categories of illness indicates to some extent the relative seriousness of each and the accepted theories of causation. It is generally recognized to begin with that general malaise is due to improper feeding and is an indication of the need for supplementary body-building properties identified in modern medicine as protein, vitamins and minerals. Agunmu and etu are the primary food supplements used to meet this need. The one is a collection of leaves and roots with or without spices pounded together, dried, and sometimes ground into powder, to be taken with corn porridge used for breakfast. The other consists of similar ingredients possibly including animal parts, fresh or dried, fossils, and minerals, charred into black powder and used in the same way. This latter may include the blood of birds or reptiles, used

primarily for their nutrient values but sometimes interpreted in "sacrificial" terms. People generally do not make any secret of the use of either agunmu or etu. They can be used by the whole family except the very young, and they can be exchanged with friends. Apart from the questionable hygienic state of the preparations, especially of agunmu, Yoruba Christians early developed a conscience against the use of either. While those who are conversant with the ingredients and preparatory procedure quickly get over their prejudice and hesitation in the case of agunmu, their doubt persisted as far as etù was concerned, particularly because of the "sacrifice to spirits or to the devil" interpretation of which the use of blood was capable.

Before passing from this question of nutritional food-supplements, the case of twins and their care may be cited with an indication of the problem it posed for Yoruba Christians in the period under review. In some parts of Yorubaland, twin-children were generally disposed of as being a sign of misfortune. Lijadu's journals referred to the prevalence of twin-disposal practices in Akure and the Ikale area. Reference has been made in a previous chapter here of the role played by T. A. J. Ogunbiyi in its eradication in Akure area and many stories have been told us of the work of persons connected with the Wesley Guild Hospital, Ilesha, in rescuing twins thrown away by their parents to die in the bush.

There is no doubt that the misfortune associated with twins arose from the problem of dietary provision for two babies, not to speak of triplets, at the same time. One baby was quite an undertaking even for prosperous parents. In other parts of Yorubaland where twins were not generally disposed of, a cult of twin-care quickly developed with appropriate rituals. The ritual of the cult of twins included cooked beans and palm-oil. Should one of the twins die, a wooden doll was made to strengthen both the mother and the remaining child who might have felt attached to the dead one.

Because palm-oil was associated with another cult, that of Esu Elegbara, and because the doll could be regarded as an image to which the oil was sacrificed, Yoruba Christians found the twin-cult objectionable.

The twin-cult, however, can be seen as a cult of nutrition. This is clearly shown in the song dedicated to the actual or prospective mother of twins:

Epo mbe, ewa mbe o, (2 ce).
Aiya mi o ja lati b'ibeji
Epo mbe ewa mbe o.

"There is palm-oil, there are beans; I say there is palm-oil and there are beans. I am not afraid, Oh no, I am not afraid to be a mother of twins, because I will get palm-oil, I'll get beans". It is a defiant song in the face of malnutrition which may be both the cause and effect of poverty. Paediatricians and nutritionists have now told us that next to malaria the most virulent cause of infantile mortality among the Yoruba has been protein-deficiency. In addition, we have been told that the richest and cheapest source of protein available in Yoruba land is leguminous, and that palm-oil is the richest source of fat. It is certainly not an over-statement to say that when Yoruba Christians frowned upon the twin cult, they have simply substituted a religious cult of Kwashiokor. It must be added, however, that many twin children of Yoruba Christian parents who survived have kept up the ritual of beans and palm-oil, openly when without a twin-imago, but secretly when such an imago is included. A measure of defiance seems to have been required to be a mother of twins or to be a twin-child, either a sceptical defianceagainst the stand of the Church or a faithful defiance against malnutrition and its consequence, Kwashiokor.

The treatment of an aisan depends on what class it falls into in the general category of disease. There are those connected with growing up, especially the troubles and complications associated

with the teething period. Then, for children or adults there are illnesses connected with the annual seasons, whether they be the dry season, wet season, the intermediate periods between the two, or the harmattan period. There are many people who are not professional herbalists who can handle the treatment of these. Some particular prescriptions are considered the guarded secret of specific families. Knowledge of such can be shared, as in the case of all prescriptions which may have been regarded at one time or another as secret, by a simple or formal ritualistic acknowledgement of the ancestors or other sources from which the knowledge is derived. In all cultures, acknowledgement is ritualistic and incantational. In a literary culture, it takes the forms of a preface and footnotes. Without that ritual, there is a lurking guilt of pilfering or an irreverent handling of the secrets of universal wisdom. Yoruba Christians quickly found that the traditional forms of ritual of acknowledgement (through the use of kola-nuts, the libation of water or wine, or the mere recital or incantation of the names of wise men of the past who though wise were pagan) could compromise their inherited faith which denied the existence of truth outside the Bible. And because they could not submit themselves to the rituals of acknowledgement, they refused to use prescriptions handed down from the remote past.

Nevertheless, Yoruba Christians carried the fear of environmental diseases with them into the new religion. When a catechist, school teacher or pastor was transferred to a new station, part of the prayer at the welcome meeting on the first Sunday or for the first few weeks of his stay in the new station was that the water of the place might agree with him, that the air of the place might agree with him, that the ground or earth of the new place might "agree with his body". The general belief behind this Christian religious practice might be stated thus: The air, water, plants, animals and soil of each place jointly create an 'atmosphere' which

differs from place to place and which affects those who live in one environment differently from how another environment might affect those who live in it. Each environment has its own character which may be described as cosmic or even psychic. When a person who is already adjusted to a particular place changes house or moves to another town, he has to re-adjust himself to the new environment. Because the atmosphere itself has a psychic nature, it is not enough for the person to adjust himself. Steps have to be taken to ensure that the psychic character of the atmosphere itself is cooperative and does not unduly affect the person adversely. Such an adverse effect may show itself in the state of physical health, the quality of sleep at night, and the general emotional stability. Christian prayer offered in this belief is a substitute for the medicine or charms which traditionally might be offered to protect or insulate non-christian people from environmental risks. The devotion with which such prayers were offered was an indication that the local congregation was afraid of the responsibility for the well-being of the 'stranger in their midst' and the shame it might bring if the local non-christians could come to feel that the Christian God did not protect those who went out in His name.

The virulent nature of arun makes the treatment of such cases the job of specialists among herbalists. Such are cases of hereditary diseases. Hernia was considered to be in this class. Of epidemics, the treatment of small-pox became a cult in itself, it being known that it was not only the care of individual patients which was required but also a discreet burial of their corpses, a more careful disposal of their belongings and the protection of the people who remained alive. The third class of arun was those like leprosy which could be said to be incurable but in which the patient required a degree of care all the same. All those are cases unquestionably reserved for first-grade specialists.

So far, causation is simply identified and treated is clearly evident. In every one of the three categories, however, a case might look more complicated and therefore treatment might require more than the service of a professional or highly specialized herbalist. The question was wont to be asked, Why is the body of one person strong and that of another ailing? Why is the case of one such that all that can be said of good in him is that after all he still breathes? Why has a virulent attack of disease come to one and not to another? Why is the environment favourable to one person and inimical to another? The answer to these and other similar questions was felt to be deep in the mysteries of nature, in man/spirit and man/man relationships. The general designation of such mysterious causation was aiye, 'the world'. Even if the complaint was a mere headache, the deeper answer as to causation and therefore of appropriate treatment could be given only by the Ifá priest, babalawo.

Modern medical psychology has come to recognise the combination of psychological with physical causes for bodily illness. The Yoruba in traditional Yoruba society would, however, speak and think not simply of psyco-somatic illness but also of what we might call socio-psycho-somatic illness in which the socio- stands for all human relationships, man to man, man to ancestors, man to God in religion and morals, man to cosmic forces in the universe. Alternative descriptive terms for this comprehensive attitude to the causes of disease might be religio-psycho-somatic or cosmo-psycho-somatic, on condition that the religious and cosmic is understood in such a sense as to incorporate all human and social relationships which are included in the above description. It is this idea of a complicated causation theory which makes the service of a babalawo necessary. Complaints of straight-forward physical causation could be treated by an ordinary herbalist. It is only a babalawo who through Ifá divinatory and sequential rituals could identify the disposition and dispensation of "the world".

In a sense, to speak of 'the world', aiye, is to refer to the whole problem of evil. Disease is seen as part of the problem of Evil in the world. To the Yoruba, the presence of evil is powerfully demonstrated by the existence of witches, sorcerers, dealers in black magic, and other agents of ill-will who practice "the evil eye". A disease is a symptom of the presence of Evil in the created universe. A wise physician does not deal simply with the symptoms. Medical practice in modern hospitals is seen by the intuitive Yoruba as tinkering around with symptoms, leaving basic causes and basic affliction unattended to.

There are three levels of ill-will in the Yoruba thought-world. Sometimes the babalawo indicates that the incidence of ill-health was originally caused by the ill-will of other people. The patient has therefore to be treated not only for a particular disease which is only a symptom of the reality described vaguely as ill-will. The patient asks spontaneously and impatiently, "what on earth do they say I have done?" And the answer comes "A nju won ko so wi l'ejo, Ija ilara ko tan boro. "No man confesses before the Council of Elders that he hates someone because that one is more successful than himself. Therefore it must be expected that a dispute based on envy will last very long." And it is generally difficult to attach this kind of cause to someone in particular. It may be a general jealousy and envy, not yet issuing in hatred. A ki w'ejo wiwo k'a j'are. "You don't take a case of the evil eye to the Council of Elders. You can't prove it." Ill-will is the root of the evil eye.

Oju l'a fe 'ni oro ko de'nu.
A nrin n'ile, inu mb'elosin,
A njo'fo sun, inu mb'eloran,
A nl'akisa, inu mb'alaso;
Oluwa, ewo ni nse?

The line leading from jealousy to envy and ultimately to hatred is a puzzlement, about which one can only ask rhetorically, 'O God, what am I expected to do, with someone who appears friendly but is bitter inside, with a horse-rider bitter towards a pedestrian, a meat-eater who envies one who is able to afford only vegetables, a well-dressed man hating one dressed in rags? O God, what am I expected to do?'

Secondly, there is the level of confirmed hatred issuing out in disloyalty on the one hand and active malice on the other.

Eni a ba f'ehin ti k'a nu didun osan
Kikan l'o nfun ni nu.
Eni a ba finu han, o j'alarokiri.
Opo a ba fi chinti, eera ti je e do nu
Eni a ni k'o fe'ni l'oju f'ata s'enu!

"The person who is expected to give us sweet oranges sends down bitter ones, he who should be a confidant turns tale-bearer, a supposed pillar to be leaned upon proves hollow, the one who is invited to blow dirt from one's eyes quickly goes first to fill his mouth with pepper! What a world!"

The third stage is that of witchcraft and sorcery, a demonstration of downright wickedness. The witch has either inherited or acquired powers for doing evil. She could have learnt the secrets of various poisons or para-psychological devices. We have to take seriously the power of malevolence, downright and cruel ill-will issuing in wickedness. Many village sermons have been preached on Psalm 72: 20 interpreted as "Have regard for the fact that there are people who enter into a convenant to perpetrate evil. Of such are witches and members of various Secret Societies. Their coverts and groves and similar dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violent wickdness". This has been the Yoruba Christian approach to the question as to whether there are witches or not. Judging from the available evidence, it seemed a more realistic position to take than the typical missionary view which regarded witchcraft as a delusion.

There is the story of a missionary who first arrived in Nigeria in 1927 and spent forty years of dedicated service in Yorubaland. He remarked in a conversation with a colleague soon before his retirement: "The older I get and the longer I am in the ordained ministry, the more I am convinced about the existence of a personal devil". His friend was much surprised, expecting him rather to have grown over the years in the conscious existence of the Holy Spirit. In the discussion which followed, the missionary suggested that the friend would not have been surprised if he took account of those forty years involvement and sharing in the life and experience of people in the Yoruba hinterland. It was his consciousness of the existence of the Holy Spirit which kept him going those forty odd years of struggling with the reality of wickedness and evil.

Witches may have exaggerated views about themselves, claiming to be able to do things which it may be proved on other grounds that they are not able to do. But that is no reason why it should be denied that they are able to do what it is evident they can do. There is a sense in which the witch cannot be what she claims she can do. That is, as a rule, it is the discovery of the ability to do something and the esprit de corps of wickedness which give greater confidence and bolster the psychology of the witch to believe she can do super-normal things. Psychedelic drugs help them to believe in their levitational powers. But all these besides, there are those who do evil, who in company bind themselves to be agents of wickedness in the dark, and who have the effrontery sometimes to boast of the evil they can do or have done. It is these, not those who are led by psychopathic conditions to "confess" the things they have only imagined but not done, that the babálawo take account of and with which the early Yoruba Christians had to contest through the power of God's Holy word, the Bible.

The babálawo deals variously with these different kinds and levels of mystical causes of disease and other misfortune. In the face of the machination of men originating in envy and jealousy, he

helps the individual to take shelter in the doctrine of predestination, to steel his heart and confidence in the ultimate fulfilment of that which has been predestined for good. It is believed that the jealousy of the envious will not be able to alter the good thing to which the envied has been predestined. Ábínú ēnī kò lè pā kádárá dà. The bābálāwó also helps to prescribe the medicine and other rituals with practical directives which he believes to have the power to protect, to deliver and sustain.

There is a cult in the Ijebu area. It is called Balùfon. It is simply a cult of new clothes. It is believed that Òrìsà Balùfon would work against any witch who threatened or meant evil against any one who made new clothes for the Balùfon festival. Participation in this festival has been an encouragement to individuals to defy the envious and embark on ambitious projects and reach for change and newness.

Theological interpretation in instruction and in sermons has been based on the explanation that fear has a large place in tribal religious life, and pastoral practice has been based on the assumption that what is necessary is that this fear be removed by the preaching of the Gospel. The fear in Yoruba traditional society does not need to be minimized though it may be that it has been exaggerated in travelogues and missionary publications. The question needs to be raised, however, whether the fear was of the ancestors and spirits, or really of men. In the settings with which we have been familira by experience or by investigation, the fear of evil men seemed to predominate over the fear of ancestors and spirits. It is witches, sorcerers and others, who possess power which they were disposed to use for destructive purposes, who were feared. Rituals alone might be sufficient to deal with ancestral and other spirits. But as for witches and sorcerers, men have been led to look for various devices, counter-medicine, protective medicines, incantations, and rituals.

Protestant Evangelical Theology and traditional Roman Catholic Theology have emphasised "personal sins and sinfulness" and their effects in alienating man the sinner from God. Not enough emphasis, from the Yoruba point of view, has been laid on sin as sheer wickedness, the mechination of others against us, sheer malevolence and its concomitant effects on personal well-being, including physical health and man-to-man relationships. There has not been enough recognition of the power of evil in the world, working through other human beings and having countless results, including psychological ones, and disrupting human social relations. The material for developing a theology to cover these realities is abundant in the New Testament, as recent development in Biblical Theology has come to attest.(15) European scientific interpretation of disease and health will have to catch up with this viewpoint.

All the same, Yoruba Christians saw the problem of evil not as something to be met simply by a rationalization or theoretical theological explanation. Rather, it was viewed as a practical situation to be dealt with and a real life problem to be solved. The supplication in the Litany of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, "that those evils which the craft and subtilty of the devel or man worketh against us, be brought to nought and..... be dispersed", expresses fully the intention of the religious devices adopted to deal with the problem of evil. These devices rested on the Pauline faith that "Christ has spoiled principalities and powers, making a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in His Cross".(16) Whatever evil spirits, personal or psychic, existed, the Risen Christ is alive, reactualizing His victory over every foe. It was in this confidence that Yoruba Christians sang their new battle song: Jésù yìó 'gẹ̄sin t'Èsù pā (2 ce) Èsù b'ó dúró, ō gbe ō; Jésù yìó gẹ̄sin t'Èsu pā. "Jesus is riding to trample the Devil underfoot.

---

15. W. Eichrodt, Man in the Old Testament, SCM Press, 1951, pp. 66-74. James Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation, J. B. Lippincott Company, New York, 1970, e.g. pp. 129-138, 145-150.

16. Colossians 2: 15.

Thus, Satan, you are already done for. Jesus is riding to trample you to death." A Christian anti-witchcraft campaign marked the beginnings of the Cherubim and Seraphim movement among the Yoruba in the 1930s. Quite a few sermons were preached on the text Exodus 22:18: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live", and the eschatological song rent the air for many a day: Àjẹ́ at'oso (3 ce) Yio wo'na. "Witches and sorcerers (3 ce) shall be cast into the furnace. The whole of the Àládúrà movement came into direct encounter and combat against the hosts of evil represented principally by witchcraft. The weapons of faith wielded by the Christians included prayer with an incantational use of the Psalms, fasting, incense and holy water. The practical effects were marked by healings and a new confidence in living.

We have left to the end a consideration of the role and significance of social factors in the healing of disease. In as much as there are social determinants in the causation of ill-health and disease, it should be expected that this diagnosis would have some bearing on therapeutic methods. Two such methods among the Yoruba stand out, and they are both related to, and used in conjunction with, the physical or material types of ọ̀ọ̀gun treated above. The two might be designated by the Yoruba words Iwòsàn and Etùtù. We will touch upon the former here and deal with the latter later on under Rituals.

What needs to be noted at this stage is that the Yoruba word for healing and cure, iwòsàn, does not emphasise medicinal application. The emphasis is on care, nursing, looking after the personwho is ill, showing love and concern, making the person feel better by looking after him. That is where the emphasis lay in traditional societies, as Mathew 25: 36 makes clear: "I was sick and you visited me." It might be a real nuisance for a modern hospital to receive tens and scores of visitors for a patient lying ill in the care of doctors and nurses; but visiting, looking up and looking after is the way of healing in traditional society. In an Àládúrà prayer for healing, the patient is made to become aware of the care and loving concern of the new extended family of the Household of God. And such a concern is in itself therapeutic.

c. Christian Faith and Medicine

The questions raised by traditional medicine for Christian faith and practice are various and involved. We do well to distinguish them in summary and deal with them separately, taking due recognition of the principles involved in each case.

Belief in God is basic to both Christianity and traditional religion. As such, the authority and fiat, which both gives and permits the power (life-force) which lies behind all medicine, must be recognised as coming from God. The concept of the Devil as being the origin of any of the powers is wrongly imputed. All authority in heaven and on earth comes from God alone.

Recognition has to be given to the fact that any potential or instrument can be used for good or bad ends. The evil force which lies behind any evil use of medicine or any other device known to man originates from within man himself. If the evil force in moral action has to be personalised as Devil, it must be taken that the Devil is the making of the moral potential of man. Anthropological studies of witchcraft have given due emphasis to the social significance of witchcraft either as protest or as social device for coping with tension. Witchcraft and other forms of black magic, by which we mean the uses of 'medicine' for evil and antisocial purposes, become culpable on the personal, social and moral levels.

The use of both therapeutic and non-therapeutic medicine, if the distinction still has to be maintained, has to be understood constantly as involving ethical questions of the deepest significance for the nature and destiny of man and of human society. It is essential to emphasise this point outside the context of devil-belief which we have already touched upon. An awareness of the significance of medical ethics has been part of modern medicine from the start as the oath of Hippocrates indicates. Similarly, in traditional medicine, the basis of Ifá underlines the moral perspective of medical practice. Two World Wars and the threat of a third have opened the eyes of contemporary man to the need for ethical perspectives in the development of

science and technology. Man in traditional society understood this. The rain-maker had to take care that he did not practise his art during the dry season when rain was not expected in any case. Rain-making was permissible only during the rainy period when the rain fails to come. The practice of medicine is not amoral.

In the case of medicine used for therapeutic purposes, the potency and effectiveness of many herbal preparations is no longer in question. The basis of much clinical medicine lies in a due acknowledgement of this fact and a scientific extraction or reproduction of the pharmaceutical properties resident in leaves and roots and minerals. Traditional medicine in this class has to learn the lesson of proper dosage and the preparation of medicine under hygienic conditions.

Clinical medical practice has much to learn from traditional diagnosis especially on the level of the understanding of illness as being not only physical and even psychological, as has now been finally accepted by modern medicine, but as also psychic, originating in and affecting the whole personality and all that goes to make it up, including environmental, ecological and social forces and circumstances. As such, the treatment of illnesses has to be aware of social factors in healing, and the Church must study how to become a healing Community.

4. PRAYER

a. Four Words for Prayer

There are four principal ideas from Yoruba traditional concepts of prayers which have determined the understanding and practice of Christian prayer among the Yoruba. The four can be denoted by the words Ofo, Awure, Adura and Ase. The first three will be considered first with an explanation of their nature as incantation.

Ofo is the incantation per se. Both the English and the Yoruba corresponding words express literally the same reference, namely, that which is spoken. The underlying emphasis is the idea that the spoken word has power. Words have power and may be an indispensable part of an oogun. This applies both to oogun used for destructive purposes

and to curative òógún. There are words which have their own intrinsic power, for example "birthday words", called ìyàjó. Such words tell some story of origin and invoke the original institution of an idea or of a fact of existence. There are incantations for curing a headache or for bringing stomach ache under control, especially if the stomach trouble is due to worms. The incantation for such a case is generally one which calls the worms by the name which gives man control over them as ordained when worms were first created.

Àwúre can be denoted as the prayer of good intention, for in the words of the hymn-writer, it is "the soul's sincere desire" deliberately carried forward into clear utterance, formal articulation and symbolic expression. It needs to be acknowledged that there are different types of prayer. Àwúre is a common type of prayer. It is this type which Harry Emerson Fosdick of New York has identified as the prayer of Dominant Desire.(17) Àwúre is a spoken dominant desire. The etymology of the Yoruba word is either to speak blessings to oneself or to dig out blessing for oneself. It is incantational.

Àdúrà was not originally a Yoruba word, but it is now the only word used for petitionary prayer addressed to a personified divinity. Even Yoruba àdúrà to God and to ancestors has to be understood in the light of the people's belief in the power latent in the spoken word. Especially is this so if the spoken word has the characteristics of being based on the story of how things came to be in illo tempore, or is spoken in the presence of things, men, or disembodied person who are themselves charged with great power (vital force). Most prayers are believed by Yoruba Christians to be of this nature, and biblical exegesis by lay preachers sometimes tend to follow this line of thought. 'We do not know how to pray aright' since even our best attested stories of how things came to be are themselves disposed to being tainted with error through forgetfulness, pollution, misbehaviour etc. "But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings which cannot

---

17. Harry Emerson Fosdick, The Meaning of Prayer, SCM Press, London, 1934.

be told". Of course, this kind of prayer should be understood as being of necessity most efficacious apropos the exceeding vital force possessed by the Holy Spirit with the added effectiveness of the groanings with which the prayer is expressed.

b. The Incantation

Part of the basis of incantation rests on the potency of the invocation of the Laws of Nature. In Yoruba medicine, for example, there is a recognition that healing is something which goes on all the time because it is necessary all the time. The very wear and tear of the body with the natural process of growing requires a continuous restoration of health and well-being. It is recognised that this is a restorative process about which we do not necessarily do anything. Yet it goes on all the same. It is a form of miracle of life. And the realisation of this is carried over into an understanding of the healing process during illness.

Part of the prayerful wishes accompanying salutations and greetings is Ajinde yio ma je o. Ajinde ara ati t'okan. "Waking up and being able to get up will continually be fulfilled for you". Interestingly enough, it is that word for waking up and being able to get up that is used for the Christian story of the Resurrection of Jesus.

An incantation which follows the same lines is:

Piri l'olongo nji, Piri l'olongo nji,
A ki ba okunrun eiye lori ite.

The sparrow wakes up bright and cheery, there is no ailing bird in any nest. The sparrow wakes up bright and cheery".

It is an incantation to induce good health by assuring the person that there is a Natural Law for health and renewal of energy. It is offered with a prayerful intention that the Natural Law of good health may be fulfilled in us day by day.

There is a similar Ofo incantation used at a difficult midwidery. The babalawo is invited in who says the incantation to the hearing of the midwives and the woman at labour:

"No one plays the midwife to a goat or a sheep. They deliver easily and smoothly. May this labouring woman have an easy delivery".

The woman is then instructed to heave. Almost invariably the child is safely delivered.

In the use of Ofo incantation for healing, we meet again an expression of belief in a non-material side to disease and healing. An incantation assumes that there is the newness of life and health which God (or Nature) brings about without our medicinal aids. We do not know how he does that, but we can depend on it and invoke it. As we have noted earlier, to a Yoruba mind, there is a non-material dimension of healing which modern scientific medicine is not alive to. Or in the other words, scientific medicine is too materialistic, too much of flesh and blood, too much of a spare-parts business, and the use of incantations is a demonstration of belief in some other dimensions to all forms of illness and healing.

By its description and appelations, the òògùn which is referred to as Òògùn, àb'enu gongo; À kò sà á, a ní kò jẹ..... is a special type. "That over there is Òògùn; looks terrifying, perhaps, shaped like an animate something, head tipped to a side. Even has a mouth there. Then you don't call it by its name, you say is is silent. But call it by its proper name, give it its praise-names, and it vibrates, it comes to life, it puts life on, it answers your call, it acts and does something for you." The type so described is made not only of roots and barks. It sometimes has also a horn, or the head of a bird or animal, is tied round with multi-coloured thread, has oil or blood poured on it perhaps, or is made of a padlock covered with animal skin with the claws of birds dangling on it. This is the type which the early Portuguese travellers in West Africa in their bafflement called a fetich. Not all Yoruba Òògùn are of this type. The use of "fetichism" as a general descriptive term for the whole of Yoruba or African religious phenomena is thus unjustifiable and has been rightly condemned by several scholars. However, the point

we are reemphasizing at this stage is that an Ofo incantation is believed to be able to activate medicines. The criticism of the suggestion, that the spell is a close relation and possibly a precursor of prayer, has been too much dominated by the theoretical search for the evolutionary origin of religion, and particularly by the debate on whether magic was older than religion or vice versa. Outside this artificial debate, we find that in practice the idea of prayer is very much invested with ideas from the usage of the spell.(13)

Included in the nature and potency of Ofo is the necessity to use appropriate words accurately. Especially where the names of symbolic objects are involved, the underlying idea extends beyond that of the potency of the spoken word to include the potency of the appropriate 'name'. The Yoruba have the idea already familiar to students of the Old Testament that the name is reverenced as being a distinct field of power. If the appropriate and original names of things have power, the original mythic names of God must be far more powerful.

Early Yoruba Christians did not hesitate to look for and announce original mythic names for God. When T. A. J. Ogunbiyi as a highly respected Anglican priest, published, as we have seen above, his pamphlets of daily and month-by-month prayers with special names of God, it came down with the weight of his office. Especially when it came to be confirmed that the names so given came from Hebrew, the original language in which the Old Testament was written, the suggestion of potency became more incontrovertible. At least so it seemed. After all, the people themselves had changed their own Yoruba names for biblical and sometimes Anglo-Saxon ones, with protective and honorific effects. Similarly, the prayer-event in which God is addressed as El-Shaddai or as Jehovah Tsidkeni must be more powerful. And Jehovah sounded more ponderous than Yahweh or Yoh, not to speak of 'The Lord' to which the Revised Version of the Bible reduced it. The Church of the Lord founded by Dr. J. O. Ositelu went further

---

18. cf. E.S. Waterhouse, The Dawn of Religion, Epworth Press, London, 1936, pp. 109f.

than Ogunbiyi and commanded more respect in some circles when it introduced such names as ELL ELLIJONI, JEHOVAH JOFFELLAH or HASI SHA ELIHAMATI or YAHIEOMIEOTABBEULAL.(19)

The Ethiopian National Church of Adeniran Oke distinguished between Psalms of Praise and the Petitionary Psalms which included the penitential and imprecatory Psalms. The former they called by the Yoruba name Rárà: the other was called Ofo. Rárà is a eulogy sung in a special poetic style characterised by its disjointed rhythm. Ofo is what is under discussion here. To identify particular biblical psalms as Ofo was the beginning of giving religious dignity to traditional Yoruba Ofo and of modifying and converting those traditional ones for use in Christian devotion. In practice, the different forms of Ofo including Awure and Ase have been adapted by various Christian groups for private prayer and public Christian worship.

An interdenominational Prayer Group movement sprang up in Lagos in the early forties, as a response to the Aladura movement, from within the longer established Churches. The groups met at first only in the early mornings, sometimes as early as 4 a.m. Members joined the group in any Church building nearest to their homes. It was felt that in that way as many Christians who wanted could join a committed prayer group before going to work, as had been the practice in the villages from where most of the members migrated into the city. Such groups would then meet the need because of which many had seceded to join the Aladura. Most of the groups were led by charismatic individual laymen, though others were led or supported by ordained pastors who had strong feelings about the power of prayer, who possibly sympathized with the Aladura movement but could not go out of the camp with it. Where such Groups were led by laymen, with strong character, such would bring into the Groups some ingenuity inherited from traditional religion. Most of the pastors had strong reservations about doing this. But it is not always that the temptation was resisted to the end.

---

19. H. W. Turner, op. cit. vol. II, pp. 74-5, 121, 204.

Rev. A. T. Ola Oludo, famous Yoruba hymn-writer[20], sometime Chairman of the Lagos District of the Methodist Church, wrote a small booklet of thirty short prayers, one for each day of a month, with an appendix of twelve other prayers arranged in three groups for blessing a newly married couple, for opening of a new house, and for blessing a student or apprentice on the completion of his training. The title of the book is significant: Àsẹ̀ L'Óruko Ọ̀lúwa, which may be rendered as "Amen in the Name of the Lord", with 'Amen' here carrying the sense of a fiat, the authority or command to make things come to pass, the compulsive force which makes prayer more than a request or petition but the invocation of a law which carries with it its own fulfilment. The book was made for either individual use or for the use of Church Prayer Groups. It has a sub-title: Àdúrà Àpẹmọ́ra ni a'pe Tẹnidire, which can be explained thus: If I call by name a man named 'My lot is good', I call a blessing on myself. By reciting the statements of my own well-being, contained in this book, and ending each statement, 'Through Jesus Christ our Lord', I ensure that the statements will become true for me.

The first prayer reads "In the name of the Lord and with the authority of Edumare the Creator of Today, my lot shall be propitious and I will overcome; my life will be sated with honey continuously; I will have peace of mind and live in perfect bliss, I and my children and my relations. Men will see me and bless the Lord. Ase. So be it". The second prayer, like the first and many others, is similarly based on the power of suggestion and affirmation; but it has a new element introduced. There are at least three words or phrases which are associated with particular incantational stanzas. Iko ko ni ko mi l'ese (I will not be impeded on my way, or literally, No impediment will stop my feet) recalls the incantational invocation of the obvious fact that since a snake has no feet, no loop can catch a snake on its feet: Iko ki ko ejo l'ese. In the phrase efufu lele Oluwa (the wafting wind of the Lord which will blow off evil from my way), we

---

20. Rev. A. T. Ola Olude has great poetic qualities. He writes short prayers in the poetic style of his hymns.

have a metaphor which is used considerably in incantations, the wind either blows evil from one's ways or carries goods from a distance home to one, as it is claimed it did to Olokun and Olosa, the proprietors of the Sea and of the Lagoon.

Then there is the third phrase egbe Edumare, 'the Carrier of Edumare which will compulsorily carry good to me'. The Carrier, Egbe, is a special 'medicine' with a built-in incantational power which makes it automatically able to carry the person who has it from any point of danger where he unexpectedly finds himself. Those who were familiar with such incantations soon protested that phrases such as those used in the prayers of Dr. Olude carried incantational associations and raised serious questions as to the propriety of such a use in Christian prayer. In fact, what Dr. Olude committed to writing is nothing different from what is frequently heard in church services, especially during festivals, anniversaries or other special occasions where worshippers kneel round the chancel railings and are blessed by the minister. The extempore prayer of such occasions is usually laden with vivid pictures, metaphors and axioms first learnt in the incantations.

J. V. Taylor, has called attention to the awareness of "the Presence" displayed in the famous "Deer's Cry" variously dated from the fifth or the eighth century and generally known as St. Patrick's Breastplate.(21) The tone is similar in a sense to that of a Yoruba Awure incantation. The Yoruba pieces surpass it in their sweep of images with the difference that while St. Patrick's saw in the images metaphors of God's Presence, the Yoruba ones see evidence of the Work and Ordering of God. The Yoruba prayers are yet on the level of Charles Wesley's hymn 'Away, my needless fears' which closes with the words: "To accomplish His design The creatures all agree And all the attributes divine are now at work for me"(22). More than this, however,

---

21. J. V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, SCM Press, London 1963, pp. 203ff.

22. Methodist Hymn Book, No. 510.

is the fact that in the Breastplate the magnificent transition from cosmic reality to the fact of Christ is yet unparalleled in any Yoruba incantational prayer known to us. In no part of the Yoruba Church has this transition been encouraged. The official position has rather worked in favour of a radical discontinuity which is not being helped by the irresistible movement of Cultural Renewal which started from the period of West African Ethiopianism and continues to grow still.

c. 'Let it be'

Àsẹ in its earliest usage was a specific type of Ọfọ and carried the main emphasis underlying all forms of prayer to its clearest and most powerful expression. The idea, that there is an authority or law behind the Universe and behind our confidence that prayers can be answered, is basic. Àsẹ is the fiat by which, according to the Psalmist, the earth was made. "He spoke the word, and it was so"(23). According to Ifa myths of the creation of man, Obatala could make the form and image of man, but it was left to Olodumare to confer the Àsẹ which became the breath of life that made man a living soul. In that act of creation and of bringing man into being, each individual person then had to make a prenatal choice of his destiny: but personal choice could become a confirmed agreement only when Olodumare had said the Àsẹ with a clanging of the bell of creation.

It is generally believed that there are words which have power in the mouth of men who, either by eating or by an incision, have permanently applied to themselves some means which can give power to their words (Àfọsẹ). Also, there are words which have power only in association with a fresh and immediate application of an object which may be licked or eaten (Ẹpẹ, Gbètugbètu). Counter-medicines exist and are sometimes found established in clans or in families. Members of such a family boast in their family praise-song Àwa l'omo ẹpẹ kò pa; "We are of those who are already immune against curses. They cannot harm us." In a general and often in a particular sense, Christians

---

23. Psalm 33: 6-9, 107; 20.

have claimed to belong in a new way to a Jesus-impregnated version of this clan. This claim was made by other Yoruba Christians before the Aladura, based primarily on faith in Jesus the Conqueror. With the coming of the Aladura, however, it was further made, based this time on the combined potency of prayer and faith. Truly it was not for nought that the first Yoruba Christians were called Onigbagbo (literally, those who have faith). It was for a similar reason that later ones were called Aladura (those who have prayer).

The literal meaning of Ase is 'it will be so'. As such, it is the permission and authority which gave form to being and in every continuing creation brings desire to fulfilled actuality. The original 'let it be so' which both permitted and authorized sweetness and sorrow or pain and pleasure respectively is illustrated in a myth about the power of the honey-bee. To the honey-bee, Olodumare gave an Ase; with it the bee stings and with it the bee produces honey. In a similar way, the tail of a scorpion, where the sting is, is called the Ase. As in these illustrations the stinging quality or Ase is in the tail end: so also for human prayer of suggestion, intention or petition, the Ase comes at the end. It is the Amen, a credal acknowledgement that the power for fulfilment comes from God alone and that He will grant it.

In ritual prayer involving a priest, the petitioner either says his prayers and the priest says the Ase with a clanging of a gong, or conversely the priest says the words of blessing and the people respond enthusiastically with the Ase, meaning 'that is exactly what we want, now that you have said it, may it be so'. In either case, the priest is playing the role of Olodumare. Here, prayer becomes a re-enactment of the act of creation as told in the Ifa myths.

When the individual offers his own prayer in the morning, or in the depth of night as may be prescribed, the shaking of a rattle in a rhythmic fashion, which corresponds with the meter and cadence of the incantation, provides the symbolic background for the power of the fiat to accompany the prayer. The nursing mother who on her

way to the stream at dawn says her prayer for the changing of the water into medicine and rings a bell as she goes along is therefore not merely warning passers-by that she was engaged in a ritual ceremony. The ringing of the bell in itself is thought to have power to add the "It will be so" of the Almighty. It is significant that the handbell has found its way into Aladura church services. The 'prophet' announces that the time of prayer is at hand, proclaims that the Holy Spirit is descending, in some cases suggests a few lines of thought for petition, then asks the people to start. In faithful response, the noise of prayer breaks forth and fills the house. The act goes on for a few minutes with the 'prophet' adding his own words of invocation through a powerful microphone linked with several loudspeakers. Then he rings the bell and shouts, 'In the name of Je-sus', to which the people respond with a long and loud A-men. The ringing of the bell in the name of Jesus is repeated three times, followed with the thrice-repeated A-men of the people. The act is done, the prayer is already answered, the people only need to go into the world to find the prayer truly answered. Wherefore the prophet leads the people in a series of Hallelujah shouts, the prophet invariably saying only the first three syllables followed by the people's Hallelu-jah, Hallelu-jah, Hallelujah endlessly..... 'The mass is over'. Heaven begins on earth.

d. <u>To Whom and for What</u>

There are three important elements in this word-study of Yoruba ideas connected with prayer. The first is that the starting-point for prayer lies in one's desire as exemplified in the <u>Awure</u> type of prayer. The second element is the importance of the cosmological or metaphysical view of the person who prays. This is what the <u>Ofo</u> type of prayer vividly portrays. Then comes, in the third place, the personality of the religious object to whom prayer is directed, a distinct characteristic of the <u>Adura</u> type of prayer. The three elements join together to form the basis of a well-rounded prayer. Of the three, the most definitive and the most difficult to control is the question of cosmology. It is definitive because it affects the other two.

Once a prayer is addressed to a personal being, the assumption is that the addressed has some attribute of beneficence. The highest development of this idea is in the Christian concept of the Fatherhood of God which Jesus made the basis of genuine prayer. The idea of the fatherhood or motherhood of the object to whom prayer is addressed is not an impossible one in a culture where ancestor-reference is much in evidence. The cruel or antagonistic ancestor is not part of the Yoruba understanding of cosmogony, though forgetfulness of the ancestors is in itself dangerous. It is potent of adverse consequences simply because the ancestor-cult in itself is an expression of the social and psychological value of the lineage. To forget the ancestors therefore is to upset the social value-system on which personal and social well-being depends. As for the ancestors, their heavenly concern is always for the well-being of the lineage and the continuing interest of the living in the same. As such, it has not been too difficult to convince Yoruba Christians of the beneficence and Fatherhood of God. What has determined the content and quality of Yoruba Christian prayer is the people's cosmogony to which attention must now be turned.

Personal desire is inevitably the starting-point of prayer, for any kind of prayer is an expression of what one desires. A person's desire may be materialistic or spiritual or mystical. These distinctions are not necessarily recognized in Yoruba thought. They are mentioned here simply because they generally feature in discussions on this subject and because their metaphysical significance needs to be noted. Those who believe that both conscious experience and physical matter are nothingness have no alternative but to pray only for spiritual or mystical experience in which personal consciousness is lost in absorption into Universal Mind. Those who accept matter as evil have no other alternative but to pray for spiritual purity and grace. For those who take matter seriously who revel in it, who aspire to enjoy every minute of contact with it, the content of prayer has to be based on the material. The question as to which of these three groups of desire is higher and more developed than the others does not arise, it is all

a question of the metaphysical point of view. Theologians who criticize prayer in African religion as this-worldly have not taken this significance of metaphysical outlook into due consideration.(24) It is only when the people's theology changes that the content of their prayer changes. In other words, it is then that the nature or type of their quests changes.

5. RITUAL

a. The Study of Rituals

There has been an academic mind-set in the theological interpretation of sacrifice which hinders a true appreciation of the pastoral and liturgical demands on the Church in Africa today. While theologians in the study of comparative religion are satisfied with collecting scraps of information which go for parallels to the classical sacrificial theories of the Death of Christ in terms of piacular, expiatory, propitiatory or scapegoat rites, anthropologists have delved deeper to discover the psychological, sociological, psycho-analytical, symbolic structural or therapeutic significance of rituals. And these latter have not yet been taken seriously in the study of Christian indigenization in Africa.(25)

It was part of nineteenth-century evangelical theological belief that the original religion of man was monotheism and that it was God Himself who required that animal sacrifices should be brought to Him. This was based on the early chapters of Genesis and believed to have universal application in the religions of all men.(26) As such, it was natural for Christian missionaries of the 19th century to expect that all religious ceremonies found among people of other lands have a basis in sacrificial ideas, especially when they involve articles

---

25. Recent studies of Sacrifice in Africa which could have taken cognizance of contemporary anthropological insights into the nature of rituals include Francis A. Arinze, Sacrifice in Ibo Religion, Ibadan University Press, 1970; J. O. Awolalu, Sacrifice in the Religion of the Yoruba unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Ibadan, 1970.

26. Robert Brow, Religion, Origins and Ideas, Tyndale Press, London, 1966, pp. 1f.

of food and particularly the slaying of animals and the shedding of animal blood.

There is something naive and jejune in theological studies of Sacrifice, frequently made as they are with unrepentant assumptions inherited from biblical interpretations which make a sacrifice something offered to God or to some other spiritual being. However, as recent anthropological studies have come to discover, sacrifices and sacrificial systems should be studied as integral parts of the complete ritual of which they form a part.(27) Furthermore, sacrifices should be studied in an interdisciplinary context because rituals of which a sacrifice forms a part are firmly embedded in the whole of society and serve social interests.(28)

b. Ẹbọ and Etutu

Among the Yoruba, the local word, ẹbọ, for religious ceremonies performed on the direction of diviners, medicine-men and priests, and involving food, money, oil or slain animal, has been used to translate the English word for sacrifice as used in the Bible in Christian liturgy or in Christian Theology generally. As such, the word is made to carry the theological connotation which sacrifice carries in Christian Theology and Comparative Religion. A careful investigation into the use of the word ẹbọ in Yoruba religion, however, shows that it is only in a few cases that the word can be made to carry the idea of an offering to someone. An Ẹbọ in Yoruba religion, is simply a ritual performed in obedience to a religious direction, the rite being believed to have inherent in it the power to become efficacious for improving the lot of man in connection with whatever purpose and intention the person who performs the ẹbọ has in mind as pertaining to his existential situation. An ẹbọ is a ritual performed, not necessarily a sacrifice offered to some god or spirit. Even when there is some spirit or god at the other end connected with the ritual, the primary emphasis in the process is not that of offering something to

---

27. e.g. Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger, London 1966, passim.
28. Monica Wilson (1971); pp. 61ff.

that spirit in appeasement, but rather that of effecting a link with that spirit. The link in itself is believed to have the power to get something done for man's good, or in particular to exercise some corrective or restorative force in the cosmic realm.

There is in Yoruba thought the idea that ritual aids the medicine to be effective. It enables the medicine to be charged with power towards effective operation. This is found in the saying S'ebo k'ogun le je. "Ritual makes the medicine responsive". It can be taken as an extension of the medicine and vice versa, though at the same time each has its own separate existence. The relation between ritual and medicine is thus very close since they are both primarily instrumental and equally can both be expressive. The main difference is that rituals are more of action and dramatized experience than medicine. However, another distinction which is made in Yoruba between the two is as regards frequency and generalization of relevance. Ebo oto, Oogun oto: Oogun l'o l'ojo kan, Ebo l'o l'ojo gbogbo. "Ritual are different from medicine. A medicine is for one day. But rituals are for all the days". Medicine has a specificity which rituals do not have. As such medicine can be used only for specific occasions, at particular times of need, but rituals are available to be prescribed for all eventualities. Medicine is more associated with disease though it can be prescribed for non-medical purposes; rituals on the other hand, have no such primary emphasis and can be used in any situation.

It is notable that under the influence of new ideas from other religions (e.g. Christianity) and the importation of new meaning into the religious vocabulary of the Yoruba, we now find practitioners of traditional religion attributing to the word Ebo mainly the sacrificial idea of offering made to someone or to something. However, that the word has not always carried this connotation is attested by the fact that the ritual idea is what is evident in the ancient myths which are available to us from the oracular words of diviners. That is, because the myths are fixed, the original connotation of the word is preserved

and remains latent. But because practice is exposed to outside influence, the meaning changes and is changing.

Moreover, we find that in the myths two different words are used interchangeably though each one is found to have its own special emphasis. Ebo is one; the other is ẹtutu. The impression has been given in Yoruba Bible translation and exegesis that while ẹbọ stands for sacrifice generally, ẹtutu has reference to placatory or expiatory sacrifice. That this is definitely not so will be clear as we go on. Several distinctions will have to be investigated first. The distinction between ẹbọ and ẹtutu cannot be identified simply by calling one religious and the other secular, suggesting that ẹbọ is more directed to spiritual beings than ẹtutu in which the object is not so much concretized as expressive of purpose and objective. Because ẹtutu points more directly to its objective, it is not for that matter more secular than the other. Its religious nature is emphasized by the fact that it is enjoined by a divine oracle, and its performance stems from a faith-obedience to a divine directive.

Rites of redress during a period of calamity or public affliction may be either an ẹbọ, re-establishing the relationship with some patron divinity of the community concerned, or they may be ẹtutu, strictly instrumental and possessing in themselves the capacity to effect a change, to redress the wrong or restore the status quo ante.

In a similar way, in the case of an individual, rites of passage may be offered either to the ancestors, or to the person's own head as a symbol of his personality and of his need for personal fulfilment, or to some divine being. They may thus take the nature of ẹbọ. But at the same time they may be in form of ẹtutu aimed directly at effecting the strengthening of an individual's head, instilling in him the courage to be and creating for the person such a social atmosphere as will make his new status congenial. The distinction here, as far as the head is concerned, is generally made as between ori bibo, offering a sacrifice to the head, and ori wiwe which is

simply a ritual washing of the head. **Liminal** rituals, of course, are specifically spoken of as ẹ̀tutu though some **divinity** may be invoked to preside over the happening. In such a case, the divinity patently becomes instrumental. The instrumentality of the divine which is manifest in liminal rituals is actually latent in every ẹ̀bọ ritual. Ẹ̀bọ thus becomes latently 'secular' and every ẹ̀tutu is latently 'religious'. The distinction between religious and secular rituals is therefore not altogether valid.

F. B. Welbourn, in a review of Biblical Revelation and African Belief suggests: "Father Mulago's critical development of Tempel's thesis provides a framework into which the whole endeavour might be fitted. Implicitly it asks whether Prof. Sawyerr's stimulating survey of African 'sacrifice' might effectively, have been couched in terms of 'vital participation' and - by extension - whether this concept, arising from African studies, might be explored by Hebraists".(29) This suggestion that the study of the nature of sacrifice might be more meaningful and powerful when put in the thought category of "vital force" deserves close attention.

In making the distinction between Ẹ̀bọ and Ẹ̀tutu, the latter should be put in the category of vital force. Ẹ̀tutu is the rite which is effective in its own right. The very performance of the rite gets things done. The materials are not an offering to God or to the spirits. Rather either because the rite is a re-enactment of some event which happened in the far past before time was, or because particular leaves or roots or other ingredients with their peculiar "forces" have been brought together, things happen. The user becomes a participant in the life-force which brings into being and creates order out of chaos. Of many (or most) 'sacrifices' and rites in Yoruba religion, the question to be asked is not "To whom is it offered?" but "For what purpose is it performed?"

---

29. F. B. Welbourn, Theology, November 1970, p. 5190. Book Review on K. Dickson and P. Ellingworth (eds.), Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, Lutherworth, 1969.

Our contention about the nature of ẹbọ being other than the widely accepted interpretation of a sacrifice offered to some God or spirit in appeasement, or to cajole or coax the god into action, is further supported by Yoruba rites in which the death of a person is involved. Any ceremony or rite involving the death of a human person is usually described and interpreted in terms of "human sacrifice" in which an object of worship is offered the highest gift that man can give to another, life. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lays down his life for his friends". By extension, there is no greater sacrifice than this, that the life or blood of a man is offered to a god or spirit to appease the anger of the god, or satisfy its honour, or repay the due which is owed by a man or community to the superior forces that control the universe.

An examination of the Yoruba rites which tended to be interpreted as human sacrifice shows however that there is more in it than meets the eye. "Human Sacrifice" in Yoruba is not offered to God. It is widely recognised that He does not need it. The occasions of such sacrifices, however, make clear their varying purposes. At the death of a King of Ọyọ, many of his wives and servants were expected to die with him. They were either killed on his grave or they committed suicide. They were called Àbínúkú ọbà. An Àbínúkú is one who is angry to death. The name suggests that they died out of loyalty frustrated. The first Àbínúkú was said to have committed suicide out of loyalty, frustration and grief. The frustration was because he did not know what to do with himself in the absence of such a royal master. Then the tradition was later legitimated by the statement that servants' help and assistance might be available to the dead king in the beyond.

In other parts of Yorubaland, when a king died, his limbs were said to be buried in different parts of his domain, and his heart preserved to be eaten by his successor on his accession. This ritual is for the peace of the community and for the continuity of unbroken

succession. Kings and the rich might perform a human sacrifice in order to get or increase riches. The way such rites are performed suggests not an offering of the victim to the god of wealth. Rather, it is the shedding of blood to release power, the procuring of death to make available some parts of the human body to be used for the medicine, or the use of a drugged person put in a perpetual state of coma to carry the calabash of medicine believed to be capable of reproducing money.

Occasionally, a man, a young virgin, a pregnant woman, or a wealthy old woman disappears under mysterious circumstances. The popular explanation may be that cult leaders or the elders of the community have seized the person for a sacrifice for the good of the community. This may even be the official explanation. But those who know do not themselves take this explanation seriously. In fact, to say that a victim has been a sacrificial object is a euphemism for saying that the victim has been used as an ingredient in a "hard medicine". A king wanted a medicine for long life; and for this he needed the head of a person. This is what is practised and believed by the people, the popular or even official interpretation in terms of human sacrifice notwithstanding. Behind a lot of Yoruba "religion" lie beliefs and practices connected with òògùn, the medicine.

It has been known that sometimes an òtùtù quietly slides on the scale of rituals to become an ẹbọ, and what starts as an ẹbọ frequently carries the sense of an òtùtù. Any symbolism, whether literary or action-based, whether spontaneous or volitional is an appeal to experience. We take for an example the basic principles that the good things of life must be shared. A mother must not buy sweets for her own children only. When she buys for other children too or when she encourages her child to share that which is bought for the child, a friendly social atmosphere is created and any tension wherever it exists is lessened. So a Yoruba market woman buys some sugar-cane from the market. When she returns home she cuts it into small pieces

for her child to take round to his fellows. The woman says, 'give this to your Egbe'. We take this as a secular act. However, when there is tension and she consults a babalawo who directs her to do exactly that - namely, to send her child to hand round pieces of sugar-cane to her Egbe - the act becomes an etutu ritual. But, at the same time, there is the belief that particular children may be troubled by their invisible or spirit fellows with whom the child must share something to alleviate the troubles. In this case, the babalawo says exactly what he has said before, and the mother in her turn gives exactly the same instruction to the child: 'give this to your Egbe'. The child this time calls the friends together, they share some sugar-cane, part of which has been offered to the spirit-Egbe. The whole ritual now becomes an Ebo as an offering to spirits, but all the same the effect of an etutu.

The difference between ebo and etutu is not rigidly fixed. Even an ebo ultimately has the impact of an etutu. What we can affirm is that both ebo and etutu are respectively and jointly meant primarily 'for us men and for our salvation', and the emphasis is not on to whom they are offered. Yoruba Christian women in the period under study frequently faced a practical dilemma in this connection. Bringing sweets (sugar-cane, bean cake, fried ground maize or àdùn etc.) from the market and sharing it with village children may be a simple expression of Yoruba common courtesy. At what stage does it become an etutu or even an ebo? Should a Christian woman wait until Christmas, New Year, Easter or any other Christian festival before giving gifts to others? When a neighbour sends her children round to hand out sweets, should a Christian woman allow her children to take and eat it? Would this constitute allowing one's children to eat ebo, that which is supposed to have been offered to or shared with spirits? The problem of conscience faced by Christians in Corinth (I Corinthians 10: 14-33) is raised here for Yoruba Christians.

c. Rites of Child-birth

The Yoruba naming ceremony, which takes place three to seventeen days after the birth of a child, is explained in different ways. Three or four main intentions are easily identifiable, of which the naming is the most popular nowadays but not necessarily the original or earliest explanation. The first intention is to discover the ancestor who has generated the child, or who has been reincarnated in the child. In general, it is to identify the child's 'destiny'. This is called the Àtẹsẹjáiyé. It is the search for the ghost by whose feet the child has walked in to taste and enjoy life, and also the path along which the feet of the child will walk. In this sense, the Àtẹsẹjáiyé has to do both with the past and with the future. As far as the past is concerned, the child comes as an embodiment of the history and traditions of the lineage as represented by the ancestors. In respect of the future, the child not only has his own life to live as an individual, but also has the opportunity and duty of assuring the continuity and perpetuation of the lineage. The whole ceremony is therefore an incorporation of the child into the lineage made up of the living and the dead. Since the child, of course, is already a member of the lineage by being the incarnation of an ancestor, the ceremony may thus be regarded both as an acknowledgement of the arrival or return of a member and as an occasion for bidding the child welcome.

The Ìdàwọ́ ceremony relates to the cutting of the umbilical cord. This is a very delicate undertaking. For one thing, it is the severing of the cord by which the ancestor has "descended". And again, it must have been discovered that when the cord was cut with a knife, the cord tended to become infected. For this reason, different families cut it with a piece of broken glass or of some well-sharpened piece of bamboo, and with a thread tied tightly round it at a point nearer to the body. In any case, a ritual ceremony was attached to the cutting of the umbilical cord with the intention of making sure that

the ancestor was properly rehabilitated before the cord was severed and that what remained would be prevented from becoming infected. Cutting the umbilical cord was then a matter of life or death and therefore a point of danger. A similar idea pertains to the next type of ceremony.

The third intention of a new babe ceremony is denoted by the name Ikomojade, literally the ceremony of taking the child out. Until this outdooring ceremony, the child is not expected to be taken out of the house into the hazards of sunlight or moonlight and away from the security which a house represents. In the custom of some clans, even the mother herself is regarded either as a source of pollution or an easy potential target of danger. As such, the woman newly delivered of a child is held in confinement within her room for a specific number of days. The Ikomojade ceremony is therefore an 'outing ceremony' not only for the child but also for the mother. But the ceremony has greater significance for the child and sometimes the involvement of the mother becomes a role-playing on behalf of the child.

Once the reincarnated ancestor or ancestress in a child is known, or since the birth circumstances of a child immediately confer a name on the child the Ateşejaiyé in itself can be said to be a naming ceremony. The nomenclature Isomoloruko (lit. the giving of a name) which is generally used today and which has reference specifically to the act of giving a name was not used until the coming of Christianity when Yoruba Christians had to dissociate themselves from traditional assumptions of the ceremony. When a child is born outside a house, e.g., as the mother comes on her way back home from the farm, market or stream, the child is named automatically Abiona, 'born on the road'. That name is a ritual by itself and is generally invoked on the day of the ceremony for Ikomojade. The child has "brought a name from heaven", but that does not necessarily render a naming ceremony no longer essential. The process of individuation which a

naming ceremony implies is already embedded in both the Atesejaiye and the Ikomojade, and to some extent in the Idawo ceremony, but it is made formally complete in a specific naming ceremony.

However interpreted, the ceremonies connected with the birth of a child are ceremonies for actualizing being. The child is a representative of the ancestors and is formally welcomed back and incorporated into the family of the living. The child can now feel and say 'I belong, therefore I am'. The hazards of life are taken seriously with relevant rites to cope with them adequately. So the person can go into the world with a measure of a sense of security. But individuality also entails a personal responsibility, and this is partly the significance of a name. Nitori b'ao da'ran l'a se'mu oruko w'aiye. "Each one has his own name attached to him from birth to ensure personal identification and responsibility when an act is committed for good or for ill".

The significance of the ceremonies attached to the birth of a child is so vital that Yoruba Christians found it difficult to dissociate themselves altogether from such ceremonies. It took a very long time to know what to do. The starting-point for the substitute ceremonies was the Jewish rite of circumcision on the eighth day. This was reconstructed as a "naming ceremony" after the naming of the child John the Baptist. With the passage of time, more and more of the innocuous elements in the Yoruba traditional rite have become incorporated into the new ceremony.(30)

---

30. The most popular written Order of Christian Naming Ceremony is the one probably written originally by Mr. A. I. Ogunbiyi of Oke-Odan or by the Rev. S. A. Adébósin of the Methodist Church. However, it surfaced in the Egbado Circuit of the Methodist Church in the early forties, was amended and printed in 1953 by E. A. Adéolu Adegbola at the Methodist Layman's Training Institute, Shagamu, from where it has a very wide circulation. It has since been re-revised by Rev. E. O. Adéboyéjo, an old student of M.L.T.I., and published by the Dayster Press, Ibadan.

d. Rites of the Professions

There are professions from which Yoruba Christians have virtually excluded themselves. Hunting has been one. Yoruba hunters use many medicines which are claimed to have the power to protect the person from the attack of wild animals, to make the hunter himself courageous enough to face lonely night-watches in the forest, or even to transfer the person from the scene of danger in case of emergency. When a hunter dies, there are rituals to dispose of his chemically dangerous "medicines". The Iparunde, for this is what the ritual is called, sometimes has the appearance of a "Second burial". But it is exactly what the name says it is - Iparunde or Iscrunde - a killing or breaking and therefore disposal of the dead person's hunting implements to get rid of the 'power' with which they have been invested. Because of this association of hunting with 'medicine' and also with the Ogun cult, there were not many Yoruba Christians of the 1890-1940 period who remained in the guilds of hunters.

Blacksmithery, like hunting, is connected with the Ogun cult. Blacksmiths work on implements of iron. There was much iron-smelting in different parts of Yorubaland as the town-names Ilorin and others surely suggest.(31) These centres would be connected with the cult of Ogun. By extension, as we have noted earlier on in passing, lorry drivers, railway engine drivers and train guards are the modern equivalents of dealers in iron. Lorry and train accidents have been interpreted, as may be expected, as due to the neglect of rituals connected with the Ogun cult. This became problematic for many Yoruba Christians. All the same, many of those involved in the spread of Christianity into the Nigerian hinterland were railwaymen. But those were mainly the Station Masters, who were so many times removed from the drivers, the train guards and the track men. Many lorry or train drivers succumbed to rituals of the Ogun cults. Other Christians solved the problem by steering clear of such dubious professions.

---

31. S. O. Biobaku (ed.), op. cit., 1973, p. 146f.

The weaving industry in Yorubaland is concentrated around Oyo and Iseyin where cotton was much cultivated in the past. Since weaving is a fine art, the guild of weavers had their peculiar rituals which also included the use of 'medicine'. When we visited Iseyin in 1971, our informants could not identify a single Christian weaver among the many traditional weavers in the ancient Yoruba town.

The dyeing industry was widespread among women throughout Yorubaland, but more especially in the Abeokuta, Ibadan, Ajase-Ippo and Oro areas. The dye used was mainly of indigo colour produced from the <u>indigofera</u> trees commonly found in different parts of the mangrove and savannah areas. The process is simple, chemically, but chemical changes had to be attributed to 'medicine'. So the guild of dyers, in many places consisting of old women since it was an easy sedentary occupation, was often associated with witchcraft. Yoruba Christian women were therefore reluctant to go into the industry unless they had been divinely led into it through a dream or some oracular investigation. When they did so, it was often a defiant expression of their faith that no evil would result.

Yoruba drummers have traditionally been associated with the cult of <u>Ayan</u>. Descendants of drummers often bear names which are compounds of the cult-name, for example <u>Ayanwunmi</u>, <u>Ayandele</u>, <u>Ayandokun</u>, meaning 'I am in love with <u>Ayan</u>', '<u>Ayan</u> has entered this house', '<u>Ayan</u> becomes (as wide as) the sea'. Ritual ceremonies in honour of <u>Ayan</u> are performed on the making or the acquisition of a new drum. Sometimes a medicinal preparation with the blood of the ritual animal is smeared round the inside wall of the drum before the skin cover is sealed on. More often than not, it is the skin of a totem animal which is used to make the drum cover and the leather tongs used for modulation. The ritual, therefore, sometimes takes the nature of a totem rite. These things made it difficult for a Christian to be a drummer or for a drummer who liked to retain his profession to be converted into Christianity. The aversion of the Yoruba Church to use

the drum in Christian worship partly stems from the fear of using an animal skin without the necessary ritual or the fear of what the guild of drummers could do in retaliation for daring to venture into a restricted field.

Much of traditional Yoruba singing was connected with the cults of divinity or of royalty. The Ewi prose style of singing is much connected with the Egungun masquerade cults. The Ijala Ode style is associated with the guild of hunters and the cult of Ogun. The Efe can be entertaining and satirical. In fact, the same word is used for joking and fun-making. But the Efe singing style and melody are associated with the Gelede mask cult among the Egbado. These song-styles were never used in Church services or on any Christian occasion in our period. Nor could any Christian who was proficient in any of the art-styles agree to sing for a non-Christian ritual occasion. Many stories of persecution have been told about Christians who, belonging to particular families of singers, have denied their services to the community during rituals considered to be crucial for the public good. The ritual would not be complete without the singing; and the community would be unsafe without the ritual. This was a real dilemma for many Christians. What was true for singers in this connection was also true for dancers.

c. Rites of Traditional Chieftaincies

A brief examination of the history of the attitude of individual Christians to traditional chieftaincies should further help to underline the dilemma which traditional rites posed for many Yoruba Christians as members of the society within which they had social responsibility. Historically, it was among the Egba Christians in Abeokuta and environs that the problem first arose and first loomed large. The 19th century advent of Christianity to Nigeria, as has been indicated above was through the Egba people. It was the Egba among the freed slaves who first returned to the country after they had been converted to Christianity during their sojourn in Freetown,

Sierra Leone. It was they who after their arrival in Abeokuta sent a passionate letter to their missionary mentors in Sierra Leone pleading with them to come and evangelise the country. Their return, and the arrival of the new way of life which came with them, was first hailed with delight. Later, it was repulsed and met with dire persecution. The missionaries in Abeokuta collected their converts into "mission compounds" and religious settlements called Wásinmi where they could enjoy relative peace in seclusion. The Wásinmi settlements (literally "Come and rest", or Colonies of Peace) thus had the effect of cutting the Christians away from the traditional ways of the local communities and away from their traditional family, social and political responsibilites.

The time came when Egba Christians felt the need to apply their new enlightened outlook to the political development of Egbaland. It was the early days of the growth of the famous and significant "Egba United Government"(32) and the introduction of Lugard's "Indirect Rule". The latter meant British Administration through the acknowledged local traditional chiefs. Because there were no Christians among the chiefs, Egba Christians felt cut off from the opportunity of applying their enlightened conscience to the emerging political development. As they had reason to disagree with aspects of the implications of "Indirect Rule", they felt the white administrators were exploiting the separatedness of the Christians to the political disadvantage of the whole community. They had to look for a way out of the impasse.

The first device was for Christians to take chieftaincies within the Christian community itself. That was the beginning of "Church Chieftaincies" among the Egba Christians and eventually among the churches in Yorubaland. Bálógun Òkènlá was the first Christian chief in Abeokuta, but he started as a Church Chief.(33) Because of his

---

32. cf. A. K. Ajisafe, History of Abeokuta, pp. 162, 211.

33. E. A. Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914, Longmans 1966, pp. 47, 332.

military prowess, the political recognition of his chieftain status was not long in dispute. The strong personality of his successors, like for instance, Balogun Sowemimo, helped to confirm the position and influence of "Church Chiefs" in Egbaland. Under this arrangement or device, the problem of whether chiefs should be involved in the rituals with which their chieftaincies were associated was avoided.

A new situation arose when a person had by necessity to enter into political roles but not through a church chieftaincy. Such a situation was when Ladapo Ademola in 1920 had to succeed to the throne as Alake of Abeokuta. He was entitled to the office by being a worthy member of an Egba Ruling House whose turn it was to provide a ruling candidate. He was the most eligible candidate by virtue of his upbringing, education and experience. It would be most irresponsible for him to turn the office down on the ground of his being a Christian. There have been many Yoruba Christians who became Oba after him. The way out of the ritual dilemma, the way which he devised, and which many have followed after him, was to have a church coronation ceremony. Many Christians have doubted very much whether there were no other religious ceremonies observed in connection with his or other Christian Oba's accession to a throne. The entertaining of such a doubt does not take seriously the spiritual agony which such an Oba must have gone through before deciding to accept the chieftain position and before devising a religious ritual that could satisfy Christian conscience.

The case of Oba I. B. Akinyele of Ibadan was unique in many regards. Being already an ordained pastor of the Aladura Christ Apostolic Church and a highly devoted man, he openly repudiated any direct or indirect semblance of heathen rites at his accession. He became Oba on his own ritual terms previously acceded to by the community as a condition of his agreement to be made Oba. Even he must have gone through many sleepless nights and religious heart-searching. The experience and agony of such Christian Oba and Chiefs has been vicarious.

It has been for the good of the total Christian enterprise, being part of the stuff which makes a country either 'Christian' or 'heathen', or just simply 'secular'. But it was not seen as such.

A third stage started to emerge by the end of our period. Many more people sought for or even bought chieftaincies for personal and political purposes, some of which were unworthy in themselves. It was chieftaincies per se with the status and privileges they entailed that people sought after, not 'pagan' rituals. But they easily got such rituals in addition as part of the bargain. Since the Church did not enter much into the agony of Christians in the second stage described above, it was not in a position to understand the demand of this next situation. There was only a general attack on chiefs and chieftaincies with a blanket condemnation of the revival of paganism. There was a failure to see that the proper response should have been the creation of appropriate, meaningful and satisfying Church rituals with deep Christian symbolism and an exegesis of the socio-ethical demands of chieftaincy on a Christian.

f. Rituals old and new

Most of the rites we are dealing with here, it must be repeated, are not necessarily directed towards any spiritual being of whatever level or rank in a gradation of spirits or divinities. Failure to recognize this has constituted the gravest error of the Church both in dealing with the Yoruba convert to Christianity and in evaluating Yoruba religion.

It is incorrect to assume that a Christian who reverts to any of these rites has fallen away from God in Jesus Christ to worship some other gods or spirits. Rather, the rites are devices for dealing with particular human experiences (including levels of psychology or epistemology, of feeling or of understanding) which would lead to personal adjustment. A divine referent is not necessarily brought in. To say this is not to perpetuate the erroneous suggestion that the Yoruba knew not God or, worse still, were incapable of knowing God,

or that it was when the missionaries came that they were introduced to the God-idea. Rather, we want to emphasise that from the available evidence, most of the rituals, the performance of which have brought Yoruba Christians to fall foul of Church law and practice, have been micro-history rituals, systems of ends and means designed to express social values and the relationship of such values to one another, to effect personal adjustment and encourage social responsibility.

It is when we understand what rituals in traditional societies are supposed to do that we realise the emotional, intellectual and spiritual tension which the first few generations of converts to Christianity must have suffered and what further conflicts must have been brought when the two movements of Christian faith and science-based education have been telescoped together into the space of a few years in the life of an individual or of the society as a whole.

Those who entered into Christianity under those circumstances exercised a great daring of faith. It was not for nought that they were called Onigbagbo. The first Yoruba "people of Faith" (Onigbagbo) ran a great risk and exposed themselves to a variety of physical or health hazards. In no culture do people handle drought, epidemics, crop failure, infertility or even the crises of "passage" without rituals which are supposed to do something and meant to effect a change. In a culture with modern scientific sophistication, the ritual may be the sowing of clouds by helicopters, long queues for mass vaccination a utopian Green Revolution campaign for the use of fertilizers and insecticides, fortnightly attendance at a physician's ante-natal clinic, National Youth Service in a military, naval or "Peace" Corps, etc. They are rituals all the same, both expressive and instrumental. Early Yoruba Christians wagered their faith, with a firm Protestant conviction that the faithful righteous shall be justified and saved. The experienced miracle of faith was that in most cases they were not let down.

There were others, a trickle to start with but later becoming a mass movement, who felt it necessary to do something and who invented

new Bible-based instrumental rituals: loud public prayer in unison, consecreatd and blessed water in used beer bottles, incantational use of Psalms further strengthened with lighted coloured candles and incense, with ritual washing and membership in a new "church". Many have testified that this newly improvised ritual also works.

The children or younger compatriots of representatives of the last two groups above come back home from college with a measure of science education only to declare that everything which had gone on before, traditional or otherwise, was mere superstitution and a delusion. Some interpreted it all as a conflict between Science and Religion or between Religion and Magic. Some others kept their Science side by side with a fundamentalist, Bible-thumping or faith-healing type of Christianity. A small but increasing number of others still look up to Science for the new rituals and join the crusade for a world-changing Christianity for humanization, justice and peace.

6. MORALITY

a. The Fourth Quest

In addition to the three primary quests of life to which reference has been made earlier on, there is a fourth to which attention must be called at this stage. Morality is treated in Ifa as the Fourth Quest. We have noted that when a babalawo has cast his divinatory nuts to identify the appropriate Odu and discover the fundamental psychic forces at work in the particular situation in hand, he then proceeds to make a series of ritual prescriptions. There is a rough correspondence between each type of ritual and each of the three quests of life. Therapeutic medicine, of course, is for those whose quest is health. Awure is the more appropriate ritual in the search for riches, wealth, possessions, honour or popularity. For those whose primary quest in life is fertility and the perpetuation of their generations, formal ritual of either the ebo or etutu type is the most appropriate pragmatic tool in the context of a communion with the ancestors.

Morality is the Fourth Quest, and morality is at the same time a ritual in itself. So, it is both an end and a means towards the end. The importance attached to Morality is such that it sometimes appears as if Morality belongs to a completely independent school of thought in opposition to the more materialistic quests held in regard by the other school. Yet every consultation of the oracle is concluded with some practical directive of a moral nature either prescriptive or prohibitive that, whatever also it may be, morality has at the same time to be taken as one with the other pragmatic tools of existentialism.

Each of the sixteen basic questions set out in Odumosu's Iwe Ifa has sixteen alternative answers. This is like the Odu corpus of the Ifa system which has sixteen primary Odu with sixteen subsidiary ones, while each babalawo endeavours first to master sixteen alternative answers to each of the sixteen primary Odu. At the end of each answer in the Odumosu system, there is a ritual prescription. It is notable that the prescribed rituals in these cases are not made up of material elements. Rather, they are religious or moral, even though the word ebo is used. The two most common examples are Adura l'ebo; Suru l'ebo, meaning that prayer or patience is the prescribed ritual. All the prescribed attitudes or behaviours hover round these two axes though in some cases the distinction is not too clear whether one or the other is to be classed as a religious or a moral duty. Of such are the directives that some should cultivate having peace of mind (ifokanbale) or trust (igbekele). The implication here is that daily life and behaviour is a ritual in itself. Most of the prescriptions, however, are distinctively moral in connotation, with the emphasis on personal morality like hope, temperance, courage, tact or wisdom, truthfulness (truth in the inward parts), watchfulness, endurance or long-suffering. Social virtues like beneficence, loyalty, kindness, compassion and love are also sometimes prescribed.

We have suggested above that Odumosu's Iwe Ifa was probably an adapted translation of Napoleon's Book of Fate. If this suggestion is

correct, it is certain that the Book of Fate did not use the thought-form: 'Patience is the ritual'. The use of this in Odumosu's translation becomes then a deliberate carry-over from Yoruba traditional religion. But more, it is also a conscious attempt to suggest to Christians using the book for divination that, assuming that rituals are essential and that 'pagan' rituals are not permitted to Christians, substitutionary rituals become necessary and they are primarily moral in nature.

Implicit in all these is the principle that morality pays. A person who is in trouble, for example, is assured that deliverance is near, with the oracular explanation that it is the person's truthfulness in the inward parts which will bring about the deliverance. The way a person lives has power in itself for good or for ill. As habits grow into character, so daily habits are the elements in the rituals of living.

There is a cycle of stories in the Odu-corpus pointing to the primacy of morality as the most essential quest in life. The word used for morality in the stories is Iwa, the Yoruba word for character and for be-ing.(34) In the myths concerned, Iwa is personified and spoken of as the wife of Orunmila, the man of knowledge. The signature-theme at the start of one of the myths consists of a contrast of two types of character.

Inu bibi ni ise obirin Ogun;
Iwa tutu, Iwa pele ni ise obinrin Orunmila,
'T'inu 't'edo ni ise obinrin Agbonniregun (Ogbe - Yonu)

"Anger is the wife of Ogun, Peaceful Character is the wife of Orunmila. I say, Gentleness or Integrated Personality is the spouse of Agbonniregun". Agbonniregun is Orunmila's cognomen. The phrase translated "Integrated Personality" here is literally the state of having one's gall-bladder and kidney working well together in good health.

---

34. For a more detailed study of Iwa as Being and Morality, see my paper in Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (eds.), Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs: Lutterworth Press, London, 1969, pp. 116-136. See also Story No. 11 in Appendix II.

The story tells how Orunmila got Iwa for his wife. It was at a time when Olodumare, the owner of Heaven sent Orunmila on an assignment to the earth. The assignment was to distribute presents or "talents" to the divinities sojourning on earth. This was apparently not an easy assignment, but Orunmila performed it with due tact and discretion. Suru (Patience), who was the father of Iwa (Character), was so greatly impressed with Orunmila that he gave his daughter, Iwa, to be wife to Orunmila.

Orunmila returned to heaven with his wife. Not long after their departure, there was confusion on earth because the earth-divinities did not know how to use their respective gifts. They decided to lay a siege against heaven and confront Olodumare himself. As they arrived at the border post, the sentry of heaven relayed the message to Olodumare and the other inhabitants of heaven that there was tumult on earth and heaven was being besieged. Olodumare consulted Orunmila who counselled calm and offered to handle the matter himself. When Iwa was told what was happening, she counselled her husband not to go himself because what the situation demanded was other than knowledge. She offered herself to go.

Iwa went to meet the infuriated earth-divinities, was kind and gentle towards them, persuaded them to return to the earth, and herself went back with them. Back on earth, she helped to sort things out. Where she found it tough, her father was a help to her. Some other versions of the story suggest that this restoration of order was a second assignment on which Orunmila came to the earth and that he was accompanied by Iwa his wife who was of a great help to him in resolving the conflicts.

Olodumare was so impressed with the result of the mission and the role of Iwa in it that he decided to send Orunmila back to earth on another assignment, this time to distribute to all the inhabitants on earth the garb of Character (Aso Iwa). In this effort however, Orunmila was not as successful as on the previous mission. It was Esu

who intervened, giving out his own garb to some as Orunmila was giving out the garb of Character to others. Thus, not all the inhabitants of the earth have good character because there are those who have the garb of Esu. A-dara-ma-n'iwa gba aso Esu wo. "People who are good to look at but who are not of good character have been recipients of the garb of Esu".

Another episode to which attention needs to be called is one of a domestic conflict between Iwa and another woman who was a senior wife of Orunmila. The senior wife did not like Iwa and was looking for different ways of getting her into trouble. Both of them were taking turns every fifth day in looking after the Ifa shrine of Orunmila. On one occasion the senior wife broke the Ifa divination tray in the shrine and made it appear as if it was Iwa who broke it during her turn of cleaning the shrine. It was a dangerous thing to do to break a sacred object. In the case of an Ifa divination tray, the due penalty was death. Iwa know that it was a plot to get her killed, so she absconded.

Soon after Iwa left Orunmila's home, his affairs got into a state of topsy-turvy. He consulted his Ifa oracle and it was revealed to him that this untoward situation was not a result of the broken divination tray, bad as that could be, but of the fact that Character, Good Character, had departed from him. He quickly divined to know what ritual performance would redress the situation. The prescription given was that he should buy a particular type of drum, invest it with special attributes using among other materials, mice, fish and a cock, with the invocation of Ogun and Sango. He was then to go round the villages and towns in the neighbourhood, beating the drum and singing:

Character, Character is our quest
Whatever anyone may think,
Character, that is our quest.
Under all circumstances,
Character, Character is our quest
Even if others are throwing stones,
Character, that is our quest. (Iwa l'a nwa).

Orunmila did exactly as he was directed. He went round with his drum for many a day. On his reaching the place where Character (Iwa) hid herself, the sound of the drum and the plaintive loving strains of Orunmila's singing voice emboldened her to come out. Husband and wife were re-united with rejoicing, and they went back home to resume their life together.

In these stories, Character is given a separate existence from the person who has it; yet, because it is made a wife, it is at the same time flesh of flesh and bone of bones of the person.

When confusion reigned on earth, the story says it was neither Olodumare nor Orunmila who went down to resolve it. It was Character (Iwa) by herself or possibly with Orunmila, the man of knowledge, who resolved it. We take this as a mythical expression of Autonomous Ethics, an indication that not all Yoruba ethics is necessarily theonomous.

The episode of the general distribution of the garb of Character which was frustrated by Esu distributing to some others his own garb has in it elements of Reinhold Niebuhr's "Moral Man in Immoral Society" thesis to which a number of other Yoruba stories and epigrams give expression.

On the whole, the stories and the contrast drawn between, on the one hand, Orunmila and his wife as a moral characterization and on the other hand, Ogun and his wife as also Esu and his garb, lends support to the suggestion that in whatever other ways Yoruba Orisa or divinities may be interpreted (as spiritual beings, nature divinities, autochthonous heroes, etc.), due consideration has to be given to their nature as concretization of human patterns of behaviour and traits of character. This interpretation has been clearly emphasised by those who like Suzanne Wenger, Ulli Beier and Judith Gleason, have made a mystical entry into the study of the Orisa.(35) Others like Professor Idowu, to a less extent, have at least acknowledged the distinctive moral characteristic of a number of the Orisa, thus

35. E. G. Judith Gleason (1971). pp. 111-115.

attributing to Obatala purity, to Ogun anger, with a disposition to thievery and drunkenness, and to Esu wilyness and duplicity.(36)

The story also indicate that Ifa devotees understood the relative significance of ritual correctness and moral integrity. Both the breaking of the divination tray and a person's loss of his good character could be fraught with adverse circumstances. Of the two, however, the latter, which is on the moral plane, was considered more disastrous. We could say then that, before Yoruba Christians were converted into Christianity, they had learnt from their traditional religion to appreciate the fact that moral purity was more to be cultivated than ritual purity. It could therefore be said to them on the basis of their traditional experience, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God".(37)

b. Theonomous Ethics

It is on the moral level that the Yoruba awareness of a personal God becomes most evident. God is recognized as being Himself the embodiment of all moral virtues, the author of every virtue we possess, the Father who naturally expects His children to be like Him, the Great One Who sees through the motives and intentions of every human act and therefore cannot be deceived, the Rewarder to each person according to his works, the Powerful One who turns to good the evil that men do to us. There are several stanzas from the Odu corpus in the Ifa system, not to speak of proverbs, epigrams, adages and mottoes, which establish the basis of moral obligation in God the Owner of Heaven (Olorun), the Great immeasurable Almighty (Olodumare). Many similar stanzas also specify for man the kind of human behaviour which Olodumare enjoins for the personal and social well-being of man.

God is thought of frequently in a moral frame of reference. The only sense in which the Yoruba speak of "to know God" is in respect of having a moral sense and demonstrating it in the relationship

---

36. E. B. Idowu (1962), pp. 73f, 78f, 82f., 89.
37. Micah 6:8.

between man and man. A person who is rebuked as not knowing God, ko mo Olorun, is understood to be one who seems to be incapable of showing his moral sense in human relations. Such a one is rather hard-hearted, wicked, evil, and unkindly in his ways; not showing mercy, remorse or pity; not yielding to remonstrations or to protes-tation of another's weakness. This is how a person who does not know God is identified.

In family reconciliation meetings, pleading with another person for cooperation, for family loyalty, for pity, or for a change of character was done "in the name of God", or more literally "by God" and by the ancestors. Mo f'Olorun be o, or Jowo, nitori Olorun are phrases asking particular ways of behaviour "because of God", or "for the sake of God". With the coming of Christianity, such references to the name of God were no longer made because they were taken to be an infringement of the Third Commandment. But the meaning of 'to know God' remains.

It is curious that E. M. Lijadu, in his first book on Ifa to which attention has been called earlier, roundly denied the people's perception of God and of morality. The prejudiced can see only what he wants to see; and missionary outlook in those days had its prejudices. Lack of readiness to acknowledge the moral sense of non-Christian peoples was one of them. The evidence for a moral sensitivity was clear in some of the Odu stanzas quoted by Lijadu himself, but he did not at that time see them. The Ijo Orunmila Adulawo in later years collected a number of such stanzas which were published as part of the worship book compiled by A. O. Osiga. The instances which follow here are taken from that collection.(38)

---

38. Iwe Adura ati Orin Mimo ti Ijo Orunmila Adulawo ni Ohun Orin Ede Ile Yoruba. Lagos 1958, pp. 75-91.

Eji Ogbe

Olubere ku bere — Questions upon questions

Olubere ku bere — Answers upon answers

Mo le bere ero titi lo de ilu Ogogoroji-go — I can ask questions till I am red in the eyes

A da fun Ajagunmale — It is the oracle for Ajagunmale

Baba Akapo ni orun — The father of the diviner up in heaven

Oni k'a ma fi funfun pe dudu — He says: Don't call white black

K'a ma fi dudu pe funfun — Don't call black white

K'a ma fi ewe iroko pe ewe oiro — Don't say iroko leaves are mango leaves

K'a ma fi ewe oiro pe ewe iroko — Or that mango leaves are iroko leaves

Ifa ni ti a ko ba se bee — Ifa says if you keep this,

Ajagunmale yio ma gbe nyin l'orun — Ajagunmale will be your support from high heaven.

Ajagunmale. — Oh, Ajagunmale.

According to the stanza, the law of right behaviour was laid down by Ajagunmale the king of heaven, who is also the authority behind the Ifa oracle. To be able to answer the question why white is white and black is black is not so important as the honesty which acknowledges and testifies that white is white and black is black. Morality is respect for and obedience to the laws of nature and the Orders or Ordinances of Creation.(39)

Eji Ogbe

Yiyo ile da — Surreptitious unfaithfulness

Ni imu arun abenu se ni — Brings surreptitious illness.

Puropuro ku sinu eru — The liar dies on a mound of ashes.

Asote ku sinu agere ide — The truthful dies in a brass pot.

---

39. The literature on the involved history of the conception of 'Natural Law' in the ethical systems of different philosophical schools and of the Church is immense. See Sydney Cave, The Christian Way, Nisbet, London, 1949 p. 107f, footnote 3. On Luther's teaching of the Orders of Creation, with its criticisms, see op. cit. 172f. The errors of the conception, as shown in Yoruba life, include the perpetuation of a patriarchal conception of the Family, the authoritarian conception of the role of the Elders, the automatic and inflexible respect required for Age and Tradition, and the embargo it sometimes places on the possibility of social change.

On l'Orunmila da	This was the Oracle which taught Orunmila
Nigbati yio joko ti otito	Ever to stand by truth and uprightness.
at'ododo	
Nje, s'otito, s'ododo	So, be truthful, be upright
Eni ba s'otito l'Olodumare ngbe.	Olodumare is on the side of the truthful.

Apart from the repeated emphasis here on honesty, truthfulness and integrity, morality is seen in this stanza as based on the sanctions of regard and punishment. God is on the side of the righteous. The deceitful will be afflicted both spiritually and physically. Even the manner of one's death will be determined by whether one has been upright or not. The stanza below begins on the same note. Unfaithfulness, lying and deceit have something about them which makes them destructive. Evil kills.

Ogunda Ogbe

Eke a pa eleke	The liar is killed by lying
Odale a pa odale	The deceiver dies of deceiving
Ohun ti a ba se nisale ile	Whatever is done underground
Oju Olodumare ni to o	Is clear to Olodumare's eyes.
On lo da fun amokun-s'ole	This oracle is for the man who steals in the dark.
T'o ni oba aiye ko ri on	Who says the king does not see him.
Bi oba aiye ko ri o nko?	Suppose the earthly king does not see you.
Oju Odumare nwo o	Odumare sees it all.

God is the all-seeing who knows the secrets of every heart. He cannot be deceived as earthly potentates and law-givers can be. Behind this insistence, that God sees in the dark, is the suggestion that an action becomes more culpable when the subject gets caught. Maybe if God himself could not see, the subject might have been able to get away with it. But since God can see it even if no one else can, it becomes guilt. This suggests that the Freud-Benedict distinction drawn between Guilt-ethics and Shame-ethics is not altogether valid because a sense of shame is a concomitant of a sense of guilt. However, the moral sanction here can be described suitably as

exo-psychic rather than endo-psychic.(40)

Oyeku Ofun

Otito inu s'owon	Honesty is scarce;
Enia rere s'owon boroboro	There are not many good people.
Nigbati nko ri enia ba soro mo	When I had no one to confide in,
Mo ko oro mi da sinu	I kept my agony inside.
On l'o da fun Obaluaiye	It is the Oracle for Obaluaiye
Nigbati o njiya airi enia ba soro	When he had no confidant
Orunmila so fun u pe	Orunmila consoled him:
Olodumare r'inu	Olodumare sees the inside.
Ile nri ika	The Earth sees the wicked
Eniti o ba nse rere	Whatever good a man does
Olorun mo o	God notes it.

The clause translated 'Olodumare sees the inside' is capable of another translation in which 'The inside' becomes a symbol for good character. The expression then becomes translatable as a contrast between God who takes account of the good deeds of men to reward them with blessings, and the Earth which keeps an eye on the wicked. The Heaven/Earth symbolism is often found in Yoruba myths where the Earth is the rewarder of the evil. The praise-names Ile, oggere, af'oko-yeri, Alapo Ika has reference to the ideas of death and burial in the earth. The Earth punishes the evil with death; as such, it becomes in itself a metonym for Death. There is practical guidance in this stanza for behaviour in the total social situation of morality. The moral man in any immoral society need not fret himself to death. He is counselled rather to endeavour to preserve his moral integrity, assured that recompense comes to all in the end.

---

40. The subject of Guilt and Shame has been discussed at length with psychological insights by F. B. Welbourn in C. G. Baeta, Christianity in Tropical Africa, OUP, 1968, pp. 182-199.

c. Autonomous Ethics

Ogunda Ogbe

Eleke re idale ogun odun, ko de	The liar goes for twenty years without a return
Opuro re idale osu mefa, ko bo	The deceiver goes off for six months.
Otito inu ni la ni	It is truth that saves,
Eke ko le la enia	Dishonesty does not pay.
O da fun baba ab'ewu gereje	This is the oracle for the begowned man
T'o wipe iro l'on yio ~~ma~~ maa pa jeun	Who dishes out false oracles for money.
Otito inu kilo fun u pe	His conscience tells him;
Bi a ba npuro	A liar will suffer at the end.
Iro a pa .. ni kehin.	
Sugbon ko gbagbo	But he pays no heed
O puro titi o kan ejo	Then he got into trouble for telling lies.
Oran re wa di pipa.	He was condemned to death.
O wa wipe on ngbawe f'Olorun	Then he says he is fasting for God.
Enia ki ngbawe f'Olorun	No one fasts for God,
Af'ori eni	But for his own 'head'.
Nje, eni oran ba ni ngbawe	It is the man in trouble who fasts.

There is a moral responsibility in the role of a religious functionary. To use a religious position as a cover for falsehood is immoral. It is also a lie to suggest that a religious duty, like fasting, is for God's sake. All religious duties originate in self-concern, and are aimed at securing redress for man's ills. A false prophet is called to examine his moral standing.

In this connection, we note that medicine-men have subjected themselves to a considerable amount of moral restraint. This has been claimed in relation to the Ase and Egbe types of medicine. Ase, it must be remembered, is a type of medicine which is believed to have the ability to empower a person's words. It could be used by a policeman to arrest a dangerous culprit. But it could also be used for cursing. Egbe is the medicine which is believed to have the power to transport a person bodily from a danger scene in an emergency. But it could be used by robbers. It has been suggested that it is

for these reasons that the knowledge in either case is generally not passed on by those who know. That the fear which leads to the restraint is justified is borne out by the destructive military uses to which scientific research has been put in contemporary society. Another pointer is that more and more scientists today are being inhibited from pursuing particular research, the application of which they believe could have adverse effects on the prospects of the human race. Their Yoruba predecessors have felt the same.

Ogbe Irete (Ogbe Ate)

Ogbe Nate k'ara ko ro wa

Mo gba, mo te ni iregun Ifa.

Nigbati mo gba, Baba mi si te mi.

Nilogbon ninu, aimoro n'ikun

Ni imu 'ni wo Igbodu l'emeta

Bi a ba te Ifa tan,

Oran Esu Odara l'o ma ku,

Ese ti oran Esu Odara fi ku?

Bi a ba se Ifa tan, a ki fe obinrin Awo

A ko gbodo gba aya Isegun

A ko gbodo mu obinrin Abore wole kolokolo lo fe

A ko gbodo ba obinrin Imule eni sika

Oluwa eni ki ibi 'ni l'oro ki a se e,

Koriko tieerin ba te ki tun gbe'ri mo

Orunmila l'o te Akoda, Aseda

Araba, Ategiro, Oluwo, Eregi,

Amosu, Amoro, Dosunmu, Osu,

Orunmila Agboniregun nikansoso,

Olojo-Ibon ni a ko mo eniti o te e.

Njo bi a ba te ni tan, ngo tun'ra ni te

Ewo ti a ba ka fun ni, ngo gbo;

Tite l'a te mi, ngo tun ara mi te.

The Odu-sequence Orbe Jate for peace and tranquility.

'I accepted to be initiated' is the proud claim of an Ifá initiate'.

'I chose it before I was initiated'.

Lack of fore-thought, lack of discretion, lack of Good Character

These send one back to the Ifá grove thrice over.

A man who has been initiated still has to keep his discretion,
and steer clear of the Devil.

How does the Devil come into this?

Ah, an Ifá-initiate may not seduce the wife of another initiate

He may not elope with the wife of a Herbalist

He may not make surreptitious love to the wife of a cult priest

He may not plot evil with the wife of a confidant

He may not conceal the truth in any matter from his Oluwo

The grass which the Elephant has trodden upon does not lift up
its head afterwards.

It was Orunmila who initiated Akoda, Aseda

And a long list of others in succession until now

But whoever initiated Orunmila himself, no one knows.

Now I have been initiated, I will initiate myself.

I will carefully observe all the taboos imposed on me.

I have been initiated, I will myself seal my initiation.

Orbe Irete is one of the cycle of myths which deal with occasions of initiation. The example quoted above arises from initiation into the Ifa Oracle. A series of moral exhortations forms part of the ceremony. We have quoted earlier a case where the exhortation deals with practical discretion in life. In the present stanza, the prohibitions concentrate chiefly on the question of adultery. With the centrality of the family in Yoruba life it is not surprising to find many Odu stories on the sanctity of the married life. Virginity was held in high honour. Festivals like the Obitun in Ondo or the Ogorere Dance in Igasi near Akoko(41) are occasions for moral dedication among girls, with special emphasis on sexual continence.

---

41. See Daily Sketch, Ibadan 1/8/73.

The treatment of cases of adultery is an indication of the ultimate objective of Yoruba ethics, viz, the good ordering of society towards harmoniouz relationship and personal security. Until modern times, there was no divorce 'because of adultery'. A woman who was expecting a child out of an adulterous relationship had to confess at one time or another, and the offending man would be fined in the courts of the elders of the community. The fear that she might have a difficult delivery if she did not confess might encourage her to confess before labour pains. Relatives might help her confession by blackmailing her with the possibility of difficulty at labour. As soon as the child was born, relations of the husband would certainly look for resemblances in appearances to establish or disprove membership of their family. If the woman still had not confessed, she simply made life more difficult for herself than otherwise it could have been. Confession would lead to reconciliation. Whether she confessed or not, the child would be welcomed into the family. A name might be given to the child to indicate cryptically that there was a doubt about its paternity. Such a name like Mojere (I make a profit), though it gives away the secret that there was an irregularity in the paternity, nevertheless establishes the fact that the man and his family accept the child as theirs. Socially and psychologically, the child has been given a base for personal security. The Yoruba have recognised the truth very early that there are "no illegitimate children, there are only illegitimate parents".

d. Custom and Morality

Osa Irete

Agbara ko l'oko — The torrent has no spade
Ó f'enu gbe 'le o kan ilepa dodo — But it erodes down to the laterite.
A d'Ifa fun Isese — It is the oracle ofor Custom,
Ti ise omo lori Ijobi n'Ife — Custom which in Ife is brother to Ancestor-regard.
Kini a nbo n'Ife k'a to r'ire? — How do you bring about good in Ife?

Isese l'a nbo n'Ife ka to riro	We perform customary rites.
Baba Isese, Iya Isese	Patrilineal and Matrilineal,
Isese l'a nbo n'Ife k'a to r'iro	It is observance of customary rites which brings us good things in Ife.

The first two lines of this Odu-stanza cast a contemptous look at all sophisticated rationalism in antropology which dismiss traditional religion as primitive and stupid. It says religion is what religion does. To say, because it has no teeth therefore it cannot bite, or because it has no spade we can't see how on earth it can dig, is to show one's narrowness of range. Primitive religion may be inchoate, but it keeps the primitive society together, which is exactly what it was expected to do. To give regard to the patrilineal and matrilineal ancestors is a way of asserting and ensuring the solidarity and continuity of the clan.

Customary behaviour may be positive or negative, Negative custom is tabu. Custom (Asa) and tabus (Ewo) are not the same as Virtues and Vices. It is these latter which have personal moral tone, content and responsibility for the Yoruba. Yet behaviour which derives from ancestral sanctions has its own social and therefore moral significance. It is a demonstration of weak perception therefore for scholars discussing morality in traditional society to speak as if the natives of a traditional society made no distinction between the morally good and the morally evil.(42) To the Yoruba, asa and ewo are morally neutral. Asa speaks of how thing have always been done in the particular society. Ewo emphasise that acting contrary to Asa is risky, fraught with the possibility of untoward consequences for the individual or for the society of which he forms a part. The contravening of an ewo is therefore not advisable. That which is not advisable may be strictly prohibited with sanctions imposed by the society which may have to share in the adverse consequences of the tabooed act. Iwa is different from all these.

---

42. C. G. Baeta (ed.), (1968), paper by R. Laroche, p. 293.

A virtue or vice may have a customary denotation which is not necessarily part of the virtue and therefore distinguishable from it. Respect for elders is a virtue. To prostrate in greeting elders is a custom related to respect for elders. There are other illustrations of respectful behaviour to elders which are of the nature of custom. To give an elder the right of way, the right to take the only seat, to have the bigger share of a gift, or to administer the sharing out if he so chooses are required in society. Not to comply is an offence. But these are not the behaviours to which reference is implied in the maxim Ọmọdé tó rpaẹ̀pọ̀ lẹ́hìn agba, ọmọdé nbọ̀ wá pẹ̀ lẹ́hìn ọ̀rọ̀. "A young person who peels off the bark from the back of an elder as if . from a tree should note that his own turn will come when younger pers.as will do it for him". It is the case of deliberate insult or disobedience that the maxim assumes. This is clear from the oracular myth Ika Meji where some young people went to insult some priests and worshippers of Olodumare.

c. Morality and Be-ing

Iwa has a moral inflexion about it in a deep sense. Iwa relates to be-ing, both in origin and in the sense of effect.(44) Morality partly originates from a person's way of being. It is the quality of the person's existence that is called morality. Iwa is qualified as good or bad. It is either Iwa rere or Iwa buburu. To behave, huwa, is to grow a character. This character-growing is conceived of in other than the sense of putting in the seed of character, but in the further sense of making or causing it to germinate. A person has a personal moral responsibility to germinate and to further the growth in himself of good character. The question may be asked rhetorically from a person, who has displayed behaviour not likely to result in good character Bẹ̀ iwa l'o nhu yi? - "Do you want to suggest that this behaviour is germinating Character?" In this question,

---

44. See my paper in K. Dickson and P. Ellingworth (eds.), op. cit. pp. 116-136 for a fuller treatment of this theme.

iwa is not qualified as either good or bad. It is taken automatically to mean good character. That is what Character is meant to be. Bad character is, by implication, a freak, a development outside of the original plan, outside Custom, outside the "Orders of Creation". To live according to the law of be-ing is to live well.

8. AN IMPLICIT BUT MUTED CHRISTOLOGY

Now to summarize. H. W. Turner has suggested that Aladura preaching seems to contain "only a muted testimony to Christ".(45)

What we have described here as pragmatic tools of existentialism certainly have, in the experience of Yoruba Christians, a strong though implicit testimony to Christ. When an Aladura experiences guidance and illumination either through divination, dreams, omens or the word of the "prophet", he is in no doubt at all that it is Jesus Christ who is active through these means. Similarly, when healing of body and mind is vouchsafed to the sick, the envied, or the oppressed, it is Jesus in action. Prayers are answered and "the name of Jesus" works miracles. New rituals and ceremonies effect personal adjustment and encourage social responsibility. Strength is given in new situations to do what is good. The Christian's "infant heart conceived from where those blessings flowed"(46) and praise is sung to the name of Jesus.

From these, we are led to say that the Christology of Yoruba Christians is a pragmatic one, related to felt needs and experienced benefits. Experience from divinatory acts shows that Jesus is He who guides. As a Revealer, it is He who reveals to us our future both in a limited and in an ultimate eschatology.

Secondly, both those who use "medicine" and some Aladura who are forbidden its use know that Jesus is He who heals and makes us whole, who integrates our total personality and makes us feel at home in the

---

45. H. W. Turner, Profile Through Preaching, Edinburgh House Press, 1965, p. 79.

46. Joseph Addison's poem beginning with "When all Thy mercies..."

universe in which God has placed us. This is what Orunmila is supposed to be doing in the Ifa system. Jesus does it for us and accomplishes it in a more excellent way.

Thirdly, Jesus is He who hears our prayers and Himself intercedes for us in our utter need. Because words have power, our prayers have in them the potency to bring our requests to pass; because Jesus is the Intercessor, his prayer uttered with an agony which cannot be uttered is bound to have plenary potency.

Fourthly, more than we can do for ourselves through our rituals, Jesus brings all the forces of the universe into harmony with our ultimate good, having been given a Name which passes all names, with all authority on earth and in heaven. The greatest ritual is that which He performs through His constant presence and companionship with all who trust in Him according to His last promise after His resurrection.

And fifthly, Jesus is He who teaches and induces us to live at peace with all men on the principle of love which rules His own life; He builds us into a new community of faith and trust, with all good virtues.

Thus, Jesus is known by what He does. To know Him is to know His benefits. His roles suggest His praise-names. This is the natural Yoruba way of developing a Christology. As such, Yoruba Christology slides quietly into soteriology to such an extent that it can be said that Yoruba Christology is essentially a soteriology.

The argument of this thesis, so far, can be summarized briefly. Two types of religion are encountered in the Yoruba situation. The first, described as the Oro-type, concentrates on established practices by which individuals and communities are enabled to face the contradictions, dilemmas and tensions of life. The other, denoted as the Isin-type, devotes itself to belief in God and the worship of Him. Yoruba traditional religion is primarily of the first type. The Christianity brought by the European missionaries is of the second type.

Those who reverted from Christianity back into traditional religion went for this precise reason that they felt they still needed a religion which would help them to cope with life. This the Christianity of the missionaries did not seem to provide. That was where the Aladura came in. The task of the Aladura was to re-insert into the missionary worship of God the customary ways of helping man to cope with the dilemmas of life. We have shown in this chapter that the resultant Aladura Christianity fits into the five-point structure of Ifa myths and rituals.

VII. CONCLUSION.

"In coming to the analysis of the mutual influence of religious change and social change, we approach what may well be the central problem of the scientific study of religion. We have dealt with this problem in almost every chapter, in connection with particular questions, but it now requires more direct and explicit examination. It can serve, in fact, as a useful summary of the many principles we have used throughout this book".

J. Milton Yinger, The Scientific Study of Religion, Collier-Macmillan Limited, London, 1970, p. 480.

VII. CONCLUSION

1. A TYPOLOGY OF RELIGION

It has been part of our thesis that there are certain conceptions and christian theological emphases which stand in direct conceptual continuity with ideas in traditional beliefs and religious thought-patterns. These patterns come to be expressed in Christian images and terminology. With appropriate allowances made for the uniqueness of the Christian faith and for the awareness of man's existential need, the development of theology can more easily be mapped out than without awareness of this continuity.

Running through this study is a critical consideration and demonstration of the dialectic between five different approaches to the study of religion, viz. the theological, the anthropological, the sociological, the psychological, and the moral-philosophical. The theological or ontological approach has been dominant until lately. In recent years, however, anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists have turned their scholarship to the investigation of religious behaviour. In most cases, the result has been a one-sided interpretation of the religious phenomenon.

Theology concentrates mainly on the beliefs or doctrinal elements in religions. While anthropology is to some extent open to a consideration of the nature of divinity and supernatural relations, its approach and emphasis is phenomenological and descriptive, concentrating sometimes on the description of religious manifestations and at other times on an interpretation of them. Since Durkheim, who pointed out that religion consists not only of the elements of belief and practices but also of the phenomenon of a congregation or church, attention has been given to the sociology of religion, the nature of religious organizations and the influence of religion on society. From Schleiermacher in the nineteenth century, through William James at the beginning of this century and Freud afterwards, to mention only a few, attention has been given to the psychological dimensions

in the origin and manifestations of religion, including the psycho-analytical interpretation of religious symbols. Ethics is yet another discipline which has been undertaken in relation to religion and frequently treated as a part of religion, though the reality it deals with is significant enough to constitute it an entity in itself. An investigation of the nature of religion from the perspective of moral philosophy reveals other dimensions of religion than those found through the other disciplines. On the whole, each discipline has moved along its own tracks much in isolation from the others. The interdisciplinary approach in the study of religion is a recent development; its impact on the study of the history of religion is not yet evident. This study has essayed to make a contribution to this trend.

The "historical individualities" and the "highly complex nature" of most religions (Weber) notwithstanding, an interdisciplinary approach to the study of religion should enable us to approximate more closely towards a comprehensive typology of the nature of religion as distinct from a typology of religious evolution.(1) Once obtained, a full conspectus of the nature and competences of religion enables us to compare two or more religions as to their modalities and their measure of fulfilling their proper roles. This is different from a comparison of "types" or stages in the assumed life-cycle of the religious growth of mankind.

---

1. R. N. Bellah, in his paper "Religious Evolution", American Sociological Review, vol. 29 (1964), pp. 358-74, attempts two different kinds of typology. He outlines five stages of religious evolution and identifies a type of religion for each stage. The result is a typology with a temporal reference. That is not the kind of typology which we consider important in this context. However, in his analysis of the "process of symbolization" which makes a religion, Bellah develops another typology which he uses to examine the nature of the religion of each of his five evolutionary stages. It is this second kind of typology which we consider necessary.

We derive the framework for our typology from an analysis of Ifa in Yoruba traditional religion. The way it modifies the typology first by Durkheim and then by R. Stark and C. Y. Glock is remarkable (See Stark and Glock American Piety: The Nature of Religious Commitment, University of California Press, 1968, pp. 11-19, reprinted in Roland Robertson, Sociology of Religion, Penguin, 1969, pp. 253-261).

To Durkheim's trio of beliefs, practices and congregation, we add experience and morals as constitutive elements in the nature of religions. Because we consider experience as basic, we give right of procedence to the constribution of Psychology, followed by Theology, Anthropology, Sociology and then Ethics. These five areas, together lead us to a fuller understanding than we could have had otherwise to what religion is and does.

The five areas of religious manifestations and competences, which we have described in the case of Ifá as providing a set of pragmatic tools of existentialism, roughly correspond to the respective functions which each of the five academic specializations outlined above have attributed to religion. Prayer is the activity where the individual's religious experience most vividly expresses, articulates and nourishes itself. It is also at this depth that a "conversion" experience manifests itself. This is the realm of Psychology. Divination, especially when it is based on an interpretation of Ifá myths, is the realm in traditional religion which corresponds most closely to Theology. It is a narrow understanding of the role of divination which sees prediction about the future as its primary task. Rather, as far as Ifá is concerned, it is in divination that the nature and will of God is revealed; the nature, destiny and duty of man is made manifest; and a philosophy of history is outlined. Personal Rituals and personal "medicine", apart from the study of a demography of divinities, have occupied the interest and attention of Anthropology. When Anthropology grew into Social Anthropology and later still into Sociology, Communal Rituals and Communal 'Medicine' started to be seen in their true religious significance for social coherence, continuity and stability. Morality and Ethics stands in a class by itself.

These five elements and disciplines have pointed to the different functions which religion performs. Firstly, religion stimulates and integrates specific experiences in man. Secondly, religion provides

for man an explanation of the experiences and events in man's encounter with the universe; or in other words, it provides a world-view which enables man to make sense of his experiences. Thridly, religion furnishes man with symbolic mechanisms for restoring order and resolving the absurdities of life. In the fourth place, religion helps a community of people to sustain itself in togetherness and to maintain or modify the structures of its group existence. The moral function of religion has been left for the fifth place though it runs concurrently and operates in interplay with the others. Religion furnishes man with a system of moral values and provides a guide and sustenance for moral action. This function it performs on different levels in relation to the other elements and competences of religion. On the level of personal religious experience, morality emerges in the phenomenon of personal virtues and vices. On the theistic and doctrinal level, morality puts an aura of oughtness and credibility on the issues of orthodoxy, while at the same time it invests and sustains a sense of values. On the level of personal rituals, taboos reveal the presence of the moral dimension to the extent that the efficacy of a rite sometimes depends on the observance of a moral as well as a ritual taboo. In the moral context, Communal rituals depending on a congregation or an organised collectivity of participants and officiants both produce something akin to a corporate personality and promote an esprit de corps which generates social ethics.

2. GOD AND MAN

Taking anthropology at this point in a very broad sense to represent together the various disciplines enquiring into the constitutional nature, cultural development, social ordering, and transcendental possibilities of man, the five approaches outlined above can be reduced to two, namely the theological and the anthropological perspectives in the study of religion or even of theology. The anthropological approach can be said to have been represented since

the nineteenth century by Classical Liberal Protestantism. The development of the psychological, sociological or ethical perspectives in the study of religion can then be taken as the flowering of Liberalism. Neo-orthodoxy on the whole stands for the theological reaction against this. It is not an accident that Paul Tillich, the "theologian's theologian" who was described as the one standing upon the boundary between liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, has been the twentieth century theologian who combined in the most comprehensive way with his competence in theology an interest and competence in different anthropological disciplines (philosophy, history of religion, political philosophy, social anthropology, the corpus of historical scholarship, etc.).

For Tillich, the anthropological approach is open to the false method of naturalistic philosophy. This seeks to answer questions arising from an analysis of man's natural existence without bearing in mind all the time that it is man's existence itself which is in question. On the other hand, the theological approach gets into the trap of the supernaturalistic fallacy which sees the Christian message as a body of sacred truths that "have fallen into the human situation like strange bodies from a strange world".(2) Neither of the two methods, therefore, can be used inviolate without mutual self-criticism.

It was this which led to Tillich's method of correlation which assumed the simultaneous dependence and independence in mutual interdependence of religion and culture, of theology and anthropology, of the divine answer and man's existential questions to which the answer is given.(3) For traditional religion, as for the religion of Tillich's contemporary man, the starting-point for "theology" is man's existential condition. The resultant product is initially an "answering-theology" out of which may grow subsequently a "praise-names theology" like Karl Barth's Kerugmatic theology. This is exactly what has happened with Christianity among the Yoruba in the period under review.

---

2. Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol. I, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1951, p. 64.
3. Ibid, vol. II, pp. 13-16.

3. MAN AND SOCIETY

One question remains, the place of the individual and of society in religion. The sociology of religion received an impetus when social anthropologists discovered cases where religious and cosmological ideas could be taken as a reflection of the people's social system. From this, Durkheim developed a theory of religion that the gods that men worship are in fact contrived symbols of socity; in worshipping God man is really worshipping his own social system. For both Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown, the ultimat value of life and therefore of religion is social coherence. The social function of religion is therefore not incidental, it is intentional, so the argument runs. Karl Marx has developed this interpretation of religion as part of his political philosophy: religious legitimation of power has been used by rulers as an opiate of the people and as a means of the people's subjugation. As such, it would be necessary for the proletariat to throw off the yoke of religion as a means to their liberation. On a more sympathetic level, Max Weber has developed the same line of argument to demonstrate what the rise of capitalism owed to the Protestant ethic.

While the place of religion in relation to society cannot be denied, a balance has to be drawn between this and the relation of society to the individual. It is significant that Peter Berger, a contemporary sociologist who with Thomas Luckmann has developed a sociology of religion in the setting of a general sociology of knowledge, has at the same time noted:

> "Organized religion and the church are very much involved in the dichotomization of existence. They belong very clearly to the private sphere in terms of what is really meaningful to people's lives. And this raises obvious problems for the existence of religion in modern society. Of course, people don't say this very much. They say that religion is relevant to everything, politics, business, but I believe that it is mainly

> a rhetorical meaning which it has in public life. It is a rhetorical cover over what happens in public life, but the real meaning - what religion really means to people - I think is primarily in private life."(4)

Religion, surely, may play an important role in producing social stability; but no individual is religious for any such reason. This is obvious, but is obscured by the fact that the interpretation of a religion is generally done from the point of view of the observer-participant or of the official priestly participant, or of the personal believing praticipant. The interpretation of the observer-participant may sometimes agree with the official priestly interpretation, and both are more likely to deal with institutional religion, as can be seen in the case of the Books of Kings and of the Chronicles in the Bible. But the interpretation of the personal believer is more direct and pulsates with more life, as is the case with the Book of Psalms. Though the former can seem more rational and objective, yet it does not rob the latter of its rationality. Its rationality, of course, is not necessarily the rationality of an intellectual explanation. In chapter VI of this study of the Yoruba, we have deliberately looked out for and called attention to what the believing participants make of their religion.

Yoruba traditional religion, in its institutional form, is shown in this study to have been sociologically conditioned and socially serviceable, but its real significance for the active participants is personal, subjective, and having to do with the human situation. Christianity as it came through the missionaries was in its institutional form affected by the racial imperialism of the Victorian age. But at the same time it demonstrated a different dimension in its personal piety, as exhibited in the existential life of the missionaries themselves. The same Christianity was given a modified cultural institutional form in the hands of people like the

---

4. Thomas Wieser (ed.), Planning For Mission, Epworth Press, London, 1960, pp. 137-138.

Rev. E. M. Lijadu and others. But in the experience of the generality of Yoruba participants, it was on the personal, subjective, existential level that the modification took place. In either case, the lineaments of the indigenous Ifá heritage are evident, with a conscious preservation in the case of Lijadu and others, but in an unconscious reversion to type in the case of the Àlàdúrà.

The fact has to be acknowledged that there are Christianities and Christianities. Folk Christianity, or the Christianity of the people, based mainly on a folk understanding of the Ifá system as the typical religion and more fully developed by the Àlàdúrà, is what we have described in the last chapter.(5) Official, priestly, or ecclesiastical Christianity among the Yoruba has not been touched upon. The description of this in its various versions can be found largely in the literature of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Baptist parent-churches in Europe and America. The question of adaptation towards indigenization has not been deliberately faced then as an ecclesiastical issue. However, the movements which we have described have not passed over the heads of the chruches altogether without influencing the attitude and practices of their members. In so far as members of these churches have adopted the conclusions described in the latter part of this study, they have done it without any official approval or encouragement. Nor is their spiritual agony sympathetically understood and appreciated. But folk religion frequently spreads in spite of the lack of any official sponsorship or approval.

---

5. American sociologists use the word 'folk' to mean 'primitive', rural, non-urbanized, non-industrialized, or even traditional. "Such a society is small, isolated, non-literate, and homogenous, with a strong sense of group solidarity... Behaviour is traditional, spontaneous, uncritical and personal..." Robert Redfield, "The Folk Society" The American Journal of Sociology, 52, January 1947, p. 293. cf. Horace Miner "The Folk-Urban Continuum", American Sociological Review vol. 17, October, 1952; Gideon Sjoberg, "Folk and Feudal Societies", The American Journal of Sociology, vol LVIII, November 1952. Our use of the term here is different from the American usage. We use it to mean popular, of the people, non-official.

Folk Christianity among the Yoruba, like the religion of any group of Christians say in the Yorkshire moors of England or in the Bible Belt of America or in French Brittany or in the Saxony area of Germany or among the audience of Norman Vincent Peal in the city of New York, is not necessarily the classical Christianity according to Paul, or Origen, or Augustine, or Melanchthon, or even of John Wesley or Bishop Gore. The gap between theological scholarship and the pulpit has always been wide. Preachers are popularizers. But it was the radical change of emphasis demanded by the movement between Orthodoxy, Liberalism and Neo-orthodoxy which has recently led to attention being called to that gap and the outcry against it. The quality of what Weber calls "virtuoso religion" has always been different from what he described in contrast as "mass religiosity".

H. W. Turner made a study of preaching texts as used by Yoruba Àládúrà and came to the conclusion that Àládúrà preaching would produce a folk Christianity. The Epistle of James was the most used book! The greatest emphasis rested on "the conduct of life and the securing of blessing".(6) Our study of preaching texts in Western Nigeria among Anglicans and Methodists has not shown any significant difference from the result obtained by H. W. Turner in his study of the Àládúrà in the same areas. This result has been corroborated by Turner himself in a similar study based on Anglican and Methodist congregations in Leicester, England.(7) This is an indication that folk religion has some common basic determinants all over the world. The additional element in the Yoruba situation which we have studied is constituted by the fact that there has been a local traditional religion, Ifá, which the people consciously regarded as a model and archetype.

Each individual develops for himself a personal interpretation of the religion of his adherence. This is partly a process of appropriation of what is taught and what is ritualized, and partly also the outcome of a creative effort to apply and adapt suitable

---

6. H. W. Turner (1965), pp. 19, 62, 78f.
7. Personal conversation in Leicester, April 1970.

elements of the doctrine to one's personal situation with the evolution of appropriate practices. This spontaneous process goes on all the time, frequently in ways which give support to a theory of 'collective unconscious'(Jung) or 'collective representation' (Durkheim) and may ultimately grow into a movement. A distinction may be noted at this stage between folk or popular religion on the one hand and a sect on the other. Popular religion does not have the essential totalitarianism which has been identified as a mark of sects.(8) A person accepts the tenets and practices of a folk religion simply because they accord generally with what he considers to be an appropriate adaptation of the official beliefs and rites for his own existential situation.

From this standpoint, it is evident that the most significant conclusion to be drawn from a careful study of the Aladura, for example, is not that they somehow qualify to be recognized as "Church" as H. W. Turner claims. Rather, it is that whether or not they fit our own definition of a Church, they have evolved for themselves a dynamic form of Christian expression which makes for authentic human living and which at the same time can be seen to be related to indigenous religious traditions and culture.

4. RELIGION AND CHANGE

Once an anthropological starting-point has been made for theology, the exploration has necessarily to proceed beyond personal experience and personal existential situations. Or to put it in another way, the route of experience has to be followed to its end, for man's experience consists not only in what he feels and does with his loneliness. Paul Tillich has emphasized that all thinking is an expression of one or more of the processes which he sums up in three laws: autonomy, heteronomy and theonomy. He also suggests that these same laws determine the dialectical relationship between culture and

---

8. Bryan Wilson, Sects and Society, London, 1961, pp. 4f, 10.

religion in the process of history. We may accept this as a valid explanation of how man makes his religion and his culture. The laws govern the relationship between religion and culture because they have been the laws by which they themselves have been made in the first instance. The process by which the laws govern the making of society (culture) has been explicated by Peter Berger as an interpretation of the sociology of religion in the whole context of the sociology of knowledge. With Peter Berger, the process is described as externalization, objectivation and internalization. It can then be said that these are the laws which govern both social change and religious change and the dialectical relationship between the two. Man operates the laws daily on different levels and in various contexts in the multi-dimensional scope of his experience and activities. The process is simultaneously cyclic and linear, like a wheel travelling along the ground. It is for this reason that we cannot rest content with a recognition of the primacy of personal existential interests in religious experience, or of cults in the history of religion.

Christianity has developed over the ages not only as a cult but also as culture, insisting that social and political affairs should be seen sub specie aeternitatis et revelationis. Charles Cochrane, in his book Christianity and Classical Culture, has shown how in the first four centuries of the Christian era the real achievement of this faith was that it overcame the predominant social world-view. He has described the Pax Augustus which dominated the world of the early centuries as the fulfilment and culmination of a long-standing "effort to create a world which should be safe for civilization", and "as the last and not least impressive undertaking of what we may venture to call creative politics." But Cochrane ventured to suggest that this undertaking was seen by Christians to be based on a false or even a superstitious idea, and that it was the task of Christianity in the first four centuries to attack and defeat the idea. The idea was this, "that it was possible to attain a goal of permanent security,

peace and freedom through political action, especially through submission to the 'virtue and fortune' of a political leader. This notion the Christians denounced with uniform vigour and consistency. As a substitute, they offered to the world "the logos of Christ as the basis of a new physics, a new ethic and, above all, a new logic of human progress". The early Christians offered Christ as "a principle of understanding superior to anything existing in the classical world. By this claim they were prepared to stand or fall". That is the verdict of Prof. Cochrane about the issue of indigenisation in the period from Augustus to Augustine.(9)

This classical insight was one of those rediscovered in the Reformation of the Church in the sixteenth century when not only Martin Luther emerged with emphasis on justification by faith (a private personal religious experience), but also John Calvin interpreted the Faith in terms of God's sovereignty over the whole of life in such a way that future politics and economics were affected. The rise of Christian Socialism in the middle of the nineteenth century was not unconnected with the theological position of Calvinism and the Puritan ideal.

For our age in Africa, the triumph of Christianity will finally be found to consist not only in the extent to which native rituals are redressed in the garb of biblical stories and myths, not only in the evolution of new rites and associations to replace the ancestral ceremonies and secret societies of the past, but rather in the revolution which Christian principles and ideas can bring about in our social ideas and political practice.

The interdependence between religion and culture and between the different approaches to the study of religion which we have noted in this thesis becomes a king-pin in the methodology for indigenisation. The interplay between Christianity and traditional religion can be organised towards influencing the direction and quality of change

---

9. Charles Cochrane, Christianity and Classical Culture, O.U.P. New York, 1940, pp. v-vi, 474-516.

within religion and within the totality of culture.

Different forces are already at work in the process of religious and social change. Changes in religion bring about changes in social order, and vice versa. In religion itself, there are changes in the theological understanding or interpretation of the nature of God and of his relation to the world. Religious practitioners have been led within and outside their religions to raise new questions about man's understanding of his own nature and his place in the world, and also about the relationship between religion and morality in the face of the evident changes taking place within the systems of morality. The place of the ancient myths in religion is being challenged by the rise of new "myths" and the emergence of new historical forces. There is an increasing tension between the rituals made necessary by the new myths and the established rituals which came out of the old myths. In this situation, the old rituals have the appearance of "magic", and there is an uneasy feeling that a magico-religious system, even when it develops as a phenomenon of Christianity, is out of place side by side with the scientific world-view of modern society.

The process of social change among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria as among other African peoples has been marked by a steady movement from the feudal structure of traditional society to the more humane social relationships of which broad hints are given even in the Ifá Odu-corpus as they came down from the past. New political changes are taking place towards a world community much wider than the vision and macro-views entertained in the Ilé-Ifè myths of the origin of the world. The change to and growth within the cash economy in an ever-developing world trade system is now irreversible. African societies are witnessing the development of a technological system in which the exploits of Sàngó or of Ògún become irrelevant fantasies. As such, indigenisation today cannot concentrate mainly on a translation of the Christian faith into the language of traditional religion,

ancient myths and ancestral culture values.

Early Yoruba Christians were apparently aware of the need for Christianity to change their traditional social outlook. Examples can be found in a number of family or clan praise-names which could be regarded as no longer tenable after the advent of Christianity, and which the Christians therefore did their best to correct by substitution and inventiveness. Two illustrations will be considered here. The traditional praise-song of the Onikoyi clan[10] among the Yoruba celebrates his valour as a warrior carrying the heads of his victims in basketfuls from the battle-front, so that the mere mention of the word 'basket' would fill anyone outside his lineage with fright. Hence, Eso Ikoyi, Basket on the way back; Yanbiolu, the mention of a basket is enough to frighten the coward". Sensitive Yoruba Christians of the Onikoyi clan, who did not relish being song-praised as the descendants of the man who frightened all and sundry with a mention of his name or of anything associated with him, composed a new praise song. They rejected Eso Ikoyi, "Basket on the way back" in favour of "Eso of the Faith, lineage of inward peace; joy and peace like food to the hungry". With this, they expressed delight in belonging to a Lord who fills the heart with joy.

There is also the classic Ono alago ajilu, omo ose ku 'roni, Satide k'otunla. "We are children of those who have the bell to ring early in the morning. Yes. We are children of Sunday-is-four-days-away, the day of preparation is the day after tomorrow". This must have been invented to replace some relation of the child to the gods and the days of their worship. Rather than be named after references to cult days, Yoruba Christians sang of themselves as belonging to the tradition of those who reckoned days with Sunday as the pivot.

---

10. For praise-names of the Onikoyi (Olukoyi) lineage, see Ulli Beier and Gbadamosi Bakare, Yoruba Poetry, Ministry of Education, Ibadan, 1959, p. 46. Also Adeboye Babalola, Awon Oriki Orile, Collins, 1967, pp. 59ff. The clause under discussion here is Eso Ikoyi, Omo agbon l'ona; Yanbiolu, agbon ti d'eru b'ojo. The new praise-name made by Christians in the process of Christian indigenization is Eso Igbagbo, Omo ayo okan; ayo ti dipo obi ninu eni.

Yoruba Christians saw themselves as people of a new race, called to create a new race. Discerning Christians who love the use of Yoruba proverbs have had to do the same for a number of proverbs and local adages which carry a definitely unchristian philosophy of social life. The efforts need to be furthered with more vigour. Indigenisation should take place on these social and ethical levels too.

Granted this imperative, indigenisation is no longer the fanciful pastime of a religious elite playing the theological word-game with esoteric myths. Indigenisation becomes an existential rationalization of the social and religious pluralism which characterizes contemporary African society. It is a combined process of legitimation and therapy (11) which relates Christianity to the problems, needs, anxieties and practical difficulties of present-day personal and social conditions. It is a daring optimism which consciously brings Christian beliefs, practices and organisation to influence commonly held ideals, standards, morals, principles, world-views and social attitude in home and family life, at work and leisure, in business and economics, in politics and social administration. It is a missionary commitment which strives to make the universal ideals of Christianity become the truth or principle of understanding, the way for solving personal and social issues and problems, the contents for a personal and social philosophy of life.(12)

In a word, indigenisation is three-dimensional, being rooted in the past, but relating to the present, in the light of the pull of the future. We indigenise forward, not backward; and this is Christian mission.

---

11. Max Weber has given to the term 'rationalization' a sociological connetation which is parallel to what the word indigenisation means in contemporary missionary discussion. Peter Berger has further made functional analysis of the term and noted the roles of legitimation and of therapy, which again are the roles we claim here for indigenisation. cf. the discussion by Persons in his Introduction to Weber, 1965, pp. xxxiif. See also Peter Berger, A Rumour of Angels, Penguin, 1970, pp. 50f.

12. It is necessary at this point to draw out the parallels and contrasts between the position taken in this thesis and that in the thoughtful paper of Robin Horton, "African Conversion", Africa, XLI/2, April 1971, pp. 85-108.

For one thing, the two interpretations deal with an examination of two different questions. Horton's question is, Why do Africans convert to Christianity which is a monotheistic religion with a morally jealous God? Our question here is, Why do some Africans (Yoruba) who have been Christians either revert back to traditional religion or take it in hand to modify Christian practice in a drastic way? One deals with African Conversion; the other deals with African Indigenization of Christianity.

Secondly, for Horton, the new religious element which Christianity brought to Africa was the idea of God. This raises again the whole question of whether the idea of God was new in Africa when the missionaries came. Our interpretation here assumes that what was really new in the religious message brought by the missionaries was Jesus. Certainly, some of the people felt they expected that God could have done what the missionaries said He did in Jesus. Some even claimed Jesus was known in Orunmila. Yet the story of Jesus was wholly new.

Thirdly, Horton suggests that religion is moving from explanation, prediction and control to communion. In his opinion, the place of religion in the future lies in communion. For us, communion, or religious experience is part of a fixed five-part typology of religion. Though the emphasis may change from time to time and from one individual or community to another, the future of religion lies in its active and pioneering co-operation with the forces in other areas of life to effect social change (i.e. control). Communion is relevant to this, as a "means of grace".

APPENDIX I

E. M. Lijadu 1862-1926

Christianity in Ondo reaches the end of its first century in 1975; and the centenary celebration offers a unique opportunity for a sober reflection on the growth of the work there. It is important also as offering an occasion to consider some of the problems which now plague the whole Church in Nigeria in its growth towards mature selfhood during the last third of the twentieth century. In this connection, the story of E. M. Lijadu deserves more than a passing reference. He might be too easily dismissed casually as a disloyal son of the Church playing the role of the proverbial bull in the china shop of early Nigerian church life.

On the contrary, it may well be that Lijadu was a prophet born before his time. Precisely as a prophet he is significant not only for the Ondo area or even for Anglicanism in Nigeria as a whole. He speaks also to other churches, in relation both to their self-support, to the consequent role of the ministry and to the treatment of those who offer new ideas to the Church.

Reference has been made to Lijadu in recent publications, hinting at his significance in the study of Church growth and in the understanding of Yoruba indigenous religion. It is now necessary to set the man and his work in the right perspective in so far as he can be regarded as significant in current ecumenical discussion on the ministry, in the study of Yoruba traditional religion, and in the search for their selfhood of the churches in Africa. Apart from James Johnson, Lijadu is to be seen as the only Nigerian church worker of his day who became a genuine CHURCHMAN, took seriously Henry Venn's policy of a self-supporting Church, and tried to develop it in depth and to expand it into all areas of Church life. The other workers were simply Church AGENTS. Lijadu graduated to become a CHURCHMAN, wholly identified with the Nigerian church and yearning for it to discover fulness of life.

This study offers to correct previous studies of Lijadu at at least four points. Ayandele gave the wrong date for Lijadu's separation from the Anglican church. Fela Sowande misinterpreted his reasons for leaving that church. Bascom wrongly cited James Johnson as the first to record Ifa processes and stories. Webster uncritically classed the Evangelist Band with other "African Independent Churches", failing to record the considerable time when it existed within the Anglican church.

One of the original settlers in Abeokuta in 1830 was the man who later became known as Moses Lijadu. He was a brave warrior. As soon as he reached the age when members of his age-grade were expected to fight in defence of the tribe, he fought in all the wars between the Egba and their neighbours. But he had his private problem, a personal burden on his mind. Even when the tribe had settled at Abeokuta, his own battle was not won. He was a polygamist. But, though he had many wives, he had children by none of them. He supplicated all the gods and goddesses whom he thought could help him in his difficulty, but all to no avail. When the missionaries came and announced the existence of a more powerful god than those he had known, he decided to try this new god and see "if the God of the white missionaries could give him a child". As if they knew why he had decided to join the Church, almost the first thing they told him had to do with his married life. At least it was this which left a lasting impression in his mind. The condition laid down for his membership was that he must send away all his wives but one.

One of his wives happened to have become a Christian before him. She was born in Waterloo, a small town outside Freetown in Sierra Leone. There she was sent to school and became a Christian. Then she came with her father to Abeokuta among the groups of freed slaves finding their way back from Sierra Leone to the land of their birth from the year 1839 onwards. The fact that she was given in marriage to this middle-aged polygamist, who had no previous contact with outside enlightenment or with the newly introduced religion of the White Man spoke highly of the

.../2

man's transparent sincerity and impressive personality. On being faced with the marriage demands of the new religion which he wanted to embrace, it was this woman who stuck to him as his wife in a monogamous relationship. The others made easier for him what would have been a difficult decision to make by choosing on their own to leave either in anger that he was converted to the Christian Faith or in frustration and impatience that he would not perform the idolatrous rites which might have assured them of childbearing.

The years after he became a Christian were years of trial, for no child arrived for a number of years after his conversion and the beginning of his monogamous life. Then, when he started to have children, they died one after the other. According to local beliefs, he was being afflicted with abiku, infantile mortality caused by the spirit of dead children.

The way he bore his trials demonstrated to the missionaries the genuineness of his conversion and he was ultimately baptised about the year 1848. He developed a love for the word of God and earnestly applied himself to learning to read in his own language. His knowledge of the Bible quickly blossomed forth and he became well known and highly respected by the congregation and the resident missionaries, his pastors. In 1857, when a preaching station was being opened in Aladi, a village near Abeokuta, he was invited to go and live there as a resident evangelist and itinerant preacher to the neighbouring villages. Thus he became a full-time preacher in the service of the Abeokuta Native Church.

In his prayer life, he made a secret vow that if in response to his importunate prayer he was given a child, the child would himself be given to the service of this new God. E. M. Lijadu was the answer to that prayer. It did not take the child long to know that he had been dedicated before his birth. The Lijadus had ten children, of whom four survived them, the oldest of the four being Emmanuel Moses Lijadu, the child of promise, dedicated to Christian service before he was conceived in the womb.

Daddy Lijadu, as the father came to be known in later years, was one of the many Yoruba Christians whose evangelistic labours have gone unrecorded and whose immense contribution to the establishment of the Church in the country has not yet been given the recognition due to it. With little knowledge, they did much; with an inadequate theology, they preached the Gospel and converted many; without previous experience of the administration of the Church, they helped to establish Christian congregations in villages and towns. Their main qualification was that they were captured by something new, a liberating faith which they believed could transform personal and community life in the war-torn and socially disintegrating communities. Seeing from afar a land transformed by Christ and yielding to his rule, they wagered their faith against the protests and persecution of the elders of the land and others who were committed to the old ways of life.

Daddy Lijadu served in a number of other villages around Abeokuta; and, when old age later made it impossible for him any longer to go on preaching journeys, he played a sterling role as a leading Lay-reader and Church Elder in the congregation in St. Peter's, Ake, Abeokuta. He died in 1892 at the age of 90.

E. M. Lijadu was born on May 21, 1862 at Osiele, a village some eight miles on the Abeokuta-Ibadan road. His father was then serving in Osiele as a catechist. Five years before the birth of E. M. Lijadu, a missionary author had written a book on the rise of the church in Osiele. The opening chapter noted the start of C. M. S. work in Abeokuta from 1845 and the spread of the Gospel from that early beginning. "Many a light has been carried thence, from place to place among the neighbouring towns and villages." Then it asserted that the work at Osiele was a luminary shining more brightly than any where else in the country. "In none has it burned more brightly them at Osiele a small African Village about eight miles from Abeokuta. The catechist at Osiele since 1851 was one William Moore, and it was as his successor that Daddy Lijadu went to live in Osiele where E. M. Lijadu was born.

...Z3

Evangelistic work in Osiele was first started in 1849 by David Hinderer when he was unable because of the intertribal wars raging inland to proceed towards the North where he had been posted. It was Ibadan where Hinderer ultimately made his home for the seventeen years later recorded in the memoirs and correspondence of his wife compiled later under the title,
"Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country". But on his journeys, he constantly spent time in Osiele and helped to establish an environment strong with missionary zeal and influence.

When the child grew to school age, he went to Abeokuta. There he came under the guardianship of the Revs. S. W. Doherty and J. A. Lahanmi and Mr. J. A. Vaughan who were then connected with St. Peter's Church and School, Ake, Abeokuta. His personal decision to go into missionary service was early taken when in his days as a child in the school the resident missionary in Ake, the Rev. Henry Townsend, unexpectedly turned up in the classroom one afternoon and interrupted the lesson to ask any pupil who would like to be a missionary to stand up. Six did, and E. M. Lijadu was one of them. From that time, Mr. Townsend would go into the school twice every week to speak to the six as a class, to tell them missionary stories and provide them with special Bible instructions towards the fulfilment of their avowed aim. In later years, Lijadu recalled that the sermon which sealed his personal commitment to faith and service was one he heard preached in Breadfruit Church, Lagos, about this time. The text was Mark 9: 47-48: "if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out, it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched". He recollected this incident in the curriculum vitae which he presented to CMS to support his candidature for the ministry. The text certainly stuck in his mind and was surely determinant in not a few basic decisions which he later had to take for his life and ministry.

In 1878, he was admitted into the CMS Training Institution in Lagos where he passed through the hands of different influential missionaries of the Yoruba Mission in those days: the Revs. J. B. Wood, J. A. Maser, C. H. V. Gollmer, and A. Mann. In later years, he was able to pay tribute to the special love created in him for the Classics and Theology by Mr. Gollmer, with whom he was in correspondence for many years afterwards. He passed out of school in 1881 and was appointed in 1882 as a teacher to Ake school. Two years afterwards he was appointed as a resident Native Tutor at the CMS Training Institution where he started a friendship with the Rev. Tom Harding, to whom in later years he dedicated one of his books, Orunmila (sic).

He was an assiduous worker. Through private study, he obtained the Government 2nd Class and 1st Class Teachers' Certificates in 1888 and 1889 respectively. The Finance Committee of the CMS in Lagos asked him to teach Yoruba to the missionaries in Lagos, a task which gave him an opportunity to enter into more direct and personal contact with the missionaries. In August 1890, he was appointed to the Ondo Mission as a catechist, and thus started a service to the Ondo people which continued without a break until his death in 1926.

When Lijadu arrived in Ondo in 1890, he was a catechist working under Charles Phillips who was then the vicar of St. Stephen's, Ondo. The death of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther in December of 1891 led ultimately to the consecration of Charles Philips and Samuel Oluwole in a service conducted in Yoruba in Ibadan. A meeting of the Finance Committee during the following week appointed him immediately as pastor in charge of St. Stephen's Church, Ode Ondo. Thus, by 1894, Lijadu had become the immediate helper and colleague to Bishop Phillips in the work of the Ondo area, exercising a non-episcopal leadership over the other few agents of the CMS in the Ondo Mission. He was priested by Bishop Phillips on March 1st, 1896 at Araloya in Lagos. Lijadu was happy to recall in later years that the service was again in Yoruba. Also ordained on that day was the Rev. Edwin George of Ijebu-Ode.

..../4

In February 1898, the Finance Committee of the Yoruba Mission met in Ibadan. Before it was a petition addressed to it by the "native pastors and agents" later described in the same letter as "servants of the Church Missionary Society in Ode-Ondo". It pointed out the financial difficulty in which the agents had been working owing to the rise in the cost of living since 1891. The difficult condition was attributed to the fire which in 1891 occurred in the town soon after the annual crops had been harvested, and which therefore destroyed the whole of that year's harvest. The fire was followed in January 1892 by a war which broke out between the Ondo and the neighbouring Ikale people, thus preventing farmers from attending to their farms to make up for the loss sustained through the fire of the previous year. The end of that war opened up the roads and there was an influx of people into the town, increasing the population by an estimated 50% in 1893. A boom in the rubber trade in the years 1894-7 meant that most of the young men and the ablebodied members of the older male population turned their attention from food crops to the new cash crop with the consequence that what food there was became very expensive. Matters became worse due to the fact that labour costs also went up. Farm labourers who could have been employed by the church workers to work on their food gardens demanded high wages. Load and hammock carriers, who were the helpers of evangelists and pastors on their itineration from place to place, demanded as much as 15/- per load!

This petition, it must be noted, was written about a situation which had been deteriorating for some seven years, the people expecting a respite from year to year but their hopes being shattered by events of the succeeding years. Wages of church workers were based on an agrarian economy. But cash trading was setting in. The Ondo people themselves were happy on the whole with the changes taking place in their community. The rubber trade was doing well. They sold their rubber for export and at the same time they did much internal trading in gin and rum, in tobacco and gunpowder. The situation demanded that a wage-paying Church should adjust quickly to changing circumstances which the people in a sense welcomed. What the petition pleaded for was pity and help, the twin factors on which missionary support of the work was made to rest. All they hoped to get was "increasing their monthly stipends by a few shillings more". The letter was signed by E. M. Lijadu, J. W. Thomas the catechist, and E. A. Kayode, the schoolmaster in charge of St. Stephen s School.

By the end of June, a reply arrived to the petition. Dated June 16th, 1898, it announced that a bonus had been granted. But the Rev. Tom Harding who wrote it added the fateful words which were to stir the thinking of Lijadu on the future pattern of his own ministry. Tom Harding wrote:

"I always feel in such cases, when the money has to come from a foreign source and is contributed mostly by people poorer than any agents or Christians in this country, that either the agents should practice still stricter economy or make their appeal, where there are Christians, to the Christians who are under their ministry. See 1 Cor. 9: 1ff. In this way, a holy dependence of both Ministries and flock of a foreign source supply is created and sustained. I long to see things in a real sense Native and not having the appearance of it. When will Yoruba have a National Church at our present rate of procedure? I am convinced we are working on too elaborate and extensive lines for our people for many years to take the work, and God will judge us for it. May He teach and guide us all by his Holy Spirit and make us more like our Blessed Master Jesus".

The petitioners, on receiving the reply sent by Harding, wrote a letter to their Bishop expressing their "grief and distress" at the tone of the reply they had received from a Finance Committee of which their Bishop himself was a member. They explained that they had regarded themselves as employees of CMS, and all they had done was lay the circumstances affecting their conditions of service before their employers.

...../5

They believed and knew that CMS had its rules and they were cautious "to appeal directly to them (i.e. to CMS) rather than resort to means which would be dishonourable to the Society's rules". They concluded their letter to the Bishop by withdrawing the appeal made in February and threatening to return the portion of the bonus which they had already been paid.

The reference to God's judgement in Harding's reply to the Ondo petitioners was completely misunderstood and taken as a rebuke of the petitioners, and worse still as a direct curse on them. This will become clearer when later on we discuss the African understanding of the power of the word, especially as understood by Lijadu. They wrote to their Bishop: "We are deeply sorry to know that our appeal has exposed us to so much of human malediction and divine wrath as the Secretary's letter most clearly indicated .... And we do humbly beg the Committee to know that nothing less than their acceptance of this (i.e. the returned bonus) can set our minds fully at rest: for we really dread the idea of bringing down God's judgement upon either our own beloved CMS or on our own selves while the meat is yet in our mouths". The word 'malediction' is appositely chosen to describe their understanding of the usage of God's judgement in the letter which came to them.

Bishop Phillips duly forwarded the letter to Lagos and a reply dated 1st August was later received signed by Bishops Tugwell and Oluwole, the Revs. James Johnson and Melville Jones, members of the Finance Committee resident in Lagos. It was emphasised that Harding was expressing his personal opinion in the comments against which objections were being raised.

Those personal views were not necessarily shared by other members of the Committee though it was regretted that he had used an official letter which he signed as Secretary to the Finance Committee to publicise the opinions. Harding's letter was even referred to later in the same letter as "unofficial". Such was the embarrassment which the situation created for those who had to write this explanation. The petitioners were touched with this apparent embarrassment of their ecclesiastical fathers and thought it advisable to let the matter lie.

By the end of 1898, however, the economic situation started to improve. At least so the petitioners wanted it to be believed; and they lost no time in acquainting Harding and the Finance Committee with detailed information on market prices and rates of silver exchange. Advance notice was therefore given in a letter dated 9th December, 1898, that, owing to the improved donditions the agents would not want the special bonus to extend beyond the close of March 1899. Surely, the petitioners were still grieving over the Harding statement in the June letter, but thought it best on receipt of the Bishop's letter of sympathy and commiseration in August to let the matter rest temporarily until a better opportunity would arise.

That letter in December started to drive a wedge between Lijadu and his co-petitioners. As far as they were concerned, a suitable and sufficient explanation had been given, and the bonus they craved for had been granted. But to propose now that the bonus should no longer be paid sounded most unreasonable and was going to create further financial difficulties for those concerned. To them, Lijadu was pressing the issue too far. They were interested in cash benefits in return for their labours. He was concerned with an ideal for the propagation of the Gospel in Africa. They even suggested that he was motivated by vanity and pride. His brilliant exegesis of the Scriptures and the expression of hopes for an African-led evangelistic programme for the ultimate redemption of Africa was too much for them. They suggested that he was just showing off his knowledge. How in any case could be pretend that he was wiser than the Bishop who had not only been their father in God in the Ondo Mission for twenty-two of the twenty-four years of the Mission, but also whose wisdom and correct interpretation of the Word of God had been acknowledged by the Parent Committee far away in England by his appointment and consecration as a Bishop, a position which was held by only one European among all other Europeans in the country?

Lijadu started to feel absolutely alone. Those in Lagos who were as sophisticated as he would have understood. But he had been called of God for a special Mission not in Lagos but in Ondo . His colleagues in the Abeokuta Patriotic Society to whom he had delivered an impressive address some twelve years back on "The Effects of Foreign Literature and Science Upon the Natives of Yoruba Country" did not think him vain but rather leaned upon his leadership. His memory went constantly back to the sermon he heard preached in Breadfruit Church in Lagos on the text "If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out...." His mind dwelt on the Bible passage quoted in Harding's original letter, "For I would rather die than anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. What then is my reward? Just this, that in my preaching I may make the Gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the Gospel". (1 Cor. 9: 16ff). He knew it fell on him to live in obedience to his heavenly vision even if others would not follow him. So he drew up a programme to make himself a self-supporting minister among the people, and submitted it to the Bishop for advice and for forwarding to the Finance Committee in Lagos. His letter is best quoted in full:

UNPAID MINISTRY

A Scheme propounded by E.M. Lijadu for beginning a set of Self-supporting Evangelists for Yorubaland.

Rt. Rev. Bishop Phillips,

My Dear Father,

By the 18th of October 1900, I shall have been already full ten years in Ode Ondo, and as I am looking forward after that, God willing, to launch myself forth on a sort of Missionary enterprise, I hereby most humbly crave to be guided by your advice and counsel as to the best way to attain the object I have in view,
Viz. To begin with myself a set of self-supporting evangelists for Yorubaland. I should here lay bare my principles and plans before you, which are the following:

I. Principles which give rise to the above idea.

1. Christian religion has been brought to this our land mainly through England's goodwill and liberality whence the Church Missionary Society have the well deserved honour of being our parent in God who has hitherto borne unaided the expense and anxiety of the evangelization of our land.

2. Owing to the heavy burden which the noble Society has on its shoulders now that its field of operation embraces the whole world, it calls on all the Churches of its earlier planting to arise to their duty and position by becoming self-supporting.

3. The Church in Yorubaland is too slow to realise and rise up to this her duty and position and hence Christianity as yet fails to become indigenous among us.

4. From what the Church in Sierra Leone, or in Lagos or in Abeokuta, is now as to self-support, and from the methods which have been tried and are now being tried to see Christianity indigenous, I have been led to a permanent conviction that there is yet room for other and new methods to be adopted to inculcate the duty and practise of self-support on the Church in Yorubaland.

5. The new scheme which I am hoping to inaugurate with myself D.V. in 1901 proposes to combine with the old method of urging the people to support their ministers a new one by which ministers may be urged to support themselves.

II. Plans and Purposes. My plans and purposes in connection with the above principles are:

1. To continue missionary labour after the year 1900, God willing, on a self-supporting basis, i.e. not receiving pay from either the CMS or from any native Church.

...

.../7

2. This being done, I should feel very happy if the Finance Committee should allow me to continue my charge of St. Stephen's Church, or if this be found impracticable, they should allow me to share the work with whomsoever they may appoint to succeed me.

3. Or if it should please them to apportion to me the task of working up the stations belonging to the Ondo Church Mission under the direction of the Bishop.

4. At any rate, I desire to continue to be a CMS man to carry on my future work within CMS spheres where representatives may inspect and test it.

5. My chief aim is to live as naturally as possible among the people, work with my own hands as they do, eat what they eat, and be content with little while helping the Church onward to self-support.

6. My strong conviction is that both paid and unpaid ministers are needed here in Yorubaland to make Christianity indigenous among us. We have had the former tried long enough (nor could it be dispensed with entirely at any stage of the Church's existence), but we must adopt the latter now and try its effect if we will have Christianity to become truly indigenous in this country.

III. Application. I therefore humbly apply to you, dear father, for advice upon this most important subject on which I have consulted and obtained the counsel of my dear wife and of my people; and which; more than that, have been taken many times to God on my knees in prayer.

Will you kindly sound the Finance Committee so as to obtain their opinion as to the conditions on which alone they can countenance such a scheme as that already brought before you.

Wishing you long life and prosperity.

I remain,

My Dear Father,
Your obedient servant,
E. Moses Lijadu

Ode-Ondo,

January 14, 1899.

The year that followed saw a great deal of discussion on the subject between him and the bishop, between him and the congregation who had now been involved by the concrete proposal in this letter, between him and his wife. To the Bishop and to many in the congregation, the whole idea sounded impracticable like an idle dream. It was too revolutionary and had the spirit of revolt and disloyalty in it. Even the Committee in Lagos could not deal with it, but rather left it to the Bishop to counsel his over-enthusiastic vicar as might be found possible. The Bishop on his part did the best he could to lecture him on eccelesiastical economics, pointing out to him that no one could possibly run a Mission on his own, that even the missionaries had to depend on the gifts of many others back in their country. "Owó iwá, owó ohìn l'a fi nse Ijo", the bishop was reported to have said in an epigram: "The Church can only be run with money collected from here and there, from all and sundry". Nor did he fail to warn Lijadu that he would be throwing away a sense of security for an unnecessary sense of insecurity. On a visit to Lagos, the Bishop looked for members and friends of the Lijadu family resident in Lagos who might try to dissuade him from his reckless plan.

In Òndó itself, a meeting of the congregation was called to get the opinion of the members on the scheme. Expecially was this necessary in order to assess the strength of the support to be expected locally for one of the alternatives contained in the letter of proposal. The question was, should Lijadu be allowed to carry on his work on the basis of his proposal within St. Stephen's Church, and would this mean that the congregation itself would have to be independent of financial

..../6

aid from CMS from that time on? Or, in more general terms, did the plan for a self-supporting ministry imply self-support for the congregation within which the minister would work?

There was a division of opinion among members of the congregation. There were those who valued their independence and self-respect so much that they claimed they could not sell it for a mess of pottage of foreign aid. There were those who feared that a financial burden on the congregation more than already being borne might scare away potential members especially among the poor. This was the majority voice, and the conclusion of the meeting was expressed in a letter written on the following day, April 19, 1900, for forwarding to Lagos. The scripture passage which came easily to hand to express their mind in the letter was "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak", a text which has been echoed many a time in similar debates in the country until the "African Churches" and the Aladura movement came to demonstrate that it is possible to build up a congregation from scratch even among the poor without any financial aid and subsidy from outside the country. The letter pointed out that they were few in number in the congregation and then quickly added, "But should the Parent Committee be disposed to ask Mr. Lijadu to continue among us without pay, that decision would not be ours to take".

The debate dragged on for many years. No firm decision could be taken for twenty years. The division of opinion within the Ondo congregation continued. The Bishop saw the proposal and any decision which could implement it as a threat to his authority. Members of the Executive Committee in Lagos were divided among themselves. Bishop Tugwell who was the diocesan sat on the fence throughout. But Thomas Harding who was secretary to the Committee was an enthusiastic supporter of the Lijadu scheme. Almost none of the African members of the Committee favoured the proposal, though they were compelled by the facts to make complimentary comments on it as the years went on. The London Committee was in a dilemma. The Lijadu scheme could certainly be taken as an outworking of the Venn policy, but the Committee had tried to back out of that policy and had burnt its fingers in the Samuel Crowther episode.

However, there was a measure of mutual respect coupled with suspicion and doubt. In the meantime, Lijadu's work grew rapidly along the Ondo Waterside. There were many conversions, baptisms and confirmations. The news of the success of the work spread far and wide, and Lijadu had a number of individual supporters in Lagos and in England.

On Lijadu's suggestion, all parties concerned agreed that his nominees could train for the priesthood at Oyo for a nominal fee. It was a disagreement on this particular development which finally led to a severance of relationships. Lijadu's eldest son was the first to complete his training under the scheme. The Bishops decided that he could not be ordained, being found unsuitable for the Ministry. Lijadu saw it as a token of a lack of confidence in his work. He took his son and ordained him. Lijadu's priest's license was withdrawn in April 1920. He ordained a number of others subsequently. Some of his congregations were persuaded to dissociate themselves from him because his ministry could no longer be regarded as valid. Those which so dissociated themselves were taken over by the Anglican Church.

He was on his way to Lagos to meet his daughter who was returning from nursing training in England when he died in Ibadan on Dec. 13, 1926. CMS published an obituary in the Western Equatorial Diocesan Magazine testifying to his evangelistic zeal and successes. More and more of the remaining congregations went over to the Methodist, Anglican and United Native African churches in subsequent years. Only a handful of them remain today in the Evangelist Band under the care of his grandson.

APPENDIX II.

Odu-Ifa Translation from E. M. Lijadu's "Orunmila"

1. Orunmila says "What's going on is 'pàràmìlà'"; and I repeat "What's going on is 'pàràmìlà". Then he adds: "What a day! hunter from heaven meets the hunter from the earth"! (Ìròsùn-Ègúntán).

One day, the hunter in heaven sent his wife to the market on earth. The inhabitants of the earth did not know her for whom she was. They fought her and flogged her. When this was going on, the hunter on the earth saw her helplessness. Although he did not know whom she was, he had compassion for her, came to her aid and rescued her from those whom were being cruel to her. On her return to heaven, she related her sufferings to her husband and how she received kindness from the hunter on earth.

The hunter in heaven sent a message of thanks to the hunter on earth and proposed a meeting on a given date. When the set date came, they both met. Each of them brought a keg of palm-wine to entertain the other. Having exchanged their gifts, they sat down to drink together. In the conversation which ensued, each one recounted to the other the state of existence on earth and in heaven respectively. One after another, they emptied the dregs at the bottom of each bowlful of palm-wine on the same spot on the ground. They decided to enter into a covenant and agreed to make the spot where the sediments lay a meeting point between earch and heaven. To keep other men or beasts away from the spot, they dug a pit there and covered it up with dried leaves in such a way that any creature stepping on it would fall into it as into a trap. In addition, they covenanted that should either of them got to the spot before the other, he should take whatever prey was found in the pit, divide it equally into two, take half away and leave the remaining half for the other. Different animals got into the trap on the succeeding days and were duly shared according to the covenant.

But one day, the dog of the hunter in heaven fell into the trap and the earth hunter was the first do arrive there; he halved it accordingly and took his share away. His friend, the hunter in heaven, was shocked with this display of indiscretion; she offered a gift to Èsù and asked that he should avenge this deed. Èsù undertook to avenge on behalf of the hunter in heaven, and he sought his opportunity. On a certain day, the mother of the hunter on earth was near the spot collecting some leaves, and Èsù enticed her to that pit so that she fell in. Whereupon Èsù hastily went to invite the hunter in heaven to go for the prey. The hunter came and divided the spoil accordingly. He was on the point of departing when his friend from the earth arrived to find that his mother had become a prey and had been halved. In his sorrow, he protested that the hunter from the earth could similarly have spared his mother. A fight ensued. It was terrible. Inhabitants of the earth and inhabitants of heaven rushed in great numbers to the scene. They stood on either side of the boundary, afraid to get near, with the two rolling each other on the ground and brandishing cutlasses in between. All that the spectators could do was to cry "Let someone separate them. Where can we find a peace-maker? Where find a reconciler?" Olodumare, the High God Himself, heard the din and came along, separated them, listened to their stories and asked them both to bring forty cowries each. Forty, ogoji, is a sacred number and etymologically stands for forgiveness and reconciliation. They brought the fines. Then Olodumare joined together the two halves of the dead woman and revived her, giving her back to her son. The spot was marked with forty cowries to seal the reconciliation: All the inhabitants of heaven and earth were so pleased that they shouted "It is heaven (or the one of heaven, or the owner of heaven) who knows the way of reconciliation", Hence the name "Òrúnmìlà" Òrun (Heaven), mì - (knows), - 'là (reconciling).

Furthermore, as soon as Olodumare departed, the two men went through a ceremony of separation, in which they took a palm-leaf, with each holding one side of it and pulling it apart, saying they would no longer meet for ever. This is the origin of the ceremony of "splitting the palm-leaf" which is observed where there had been a serious rift in a family.

2.

Ekiti-pete. This was an oracle for the Earth Game-hunter. It was also for the Heaven Game-Hunter. Both of them were to perform an ebo of four pidgeons and eight hundred cowries (i.e. 200 x 4) so that their expedition into the forest for game-hunting might be propitious. But it was only the Heaven Game-Hunter who performed his ebo, the Earth Game-Hunter did not (Irosun Egutin).

From that day on, the day of splitting the palm leaf after a fight, the two hunters from earth and from heaven never met face to face. All the same, one would hail the other from a distance on getting to the boundary line. It happened that one day, as the hunter from heaven went a-hunting, he found five big eggs under the bush and collected them. On reaching the boundary line, he hailed the other and asked him to collect two gib eggs he was leaving him. As the hunter from the earth had caught no game in the hunt that day, he was very pleased to have at least those two big eggs. He went home and boiled them for his meal.

The following morning, when the hunter from heaven went for his three eggs which he had not yet cooked, he was astounded to find in front of each egg twenty thousand precious beads. He joyfully took possession of them and left the eggs in position. The following morning again, he had the same experience. So he decided to find out what was happening with the eggs he gave to the other man. He came to the boundary line, hailed the other and asked his question from a distance. The conversation went like this: "What happened to those eggs I gave you day before yesterday?" I boiled them for a meal". "How did they taste?" "Really tasty. They were good, very good". "Well then, now I know that you on earth can never be prosperous, never." But the hunter from the earth responded, "Whatever we do or not do on earth, prosperity depends on heaven. Only heaven knows the way to riches, the way to prosperity". And that is Orunmila (Orun (heaven), m'- (knows), -la (to become rich). ((This is another etymology of the name Orunmila, referring it here to riches, wealth and prosperity, rather than to deliverance into safety and peaceful relationship. Both ideas have become alternative senses of the verbal particle la.))).

3.

Ajo was the diviner on the earth and Abemo was the diviner in heaven. They both agreed to meet at intervals on the boundary line between heaven and earth. The oracle warned them to perform an ebo so that their good intentions might not be frustrated by one woman in relationship with them both. Both of them disregarded the warning and did not perform the ebo to seek the aid of Ifa. "How could one single woman foil the plan between earth and heaven being looked after by such as we are?", they sneered. (Obara-Meji)

Abemo, the diviner in heaven, had a wife whose name was Obi. Obi had no children, so her husband consulted the oracle. He was directed to make an ebo of a black goat together with twelve thousand cowries for child-bearing, and four pidgeons and seven hundred and eighty cowries for riches. Abemo performed the ebo for riches but neglected that for child-bearing. So his wife could not bear any child. Obi, the wife was sorrowful. Ultimately, she left her husband and got herself married to Ajo, the diviner on earth. Ajo consulted the oracle about his new wife and the oracle prescribed the same ebo as previously revealed to Abemo. Ajo performed the ebo duly and the woman subsequently had a child for him.

At the annual festival when the two diviners should meet for joint rituals, Obi decided to go with her husband to the celebration. There Abemo complained that Ajo had seduced his wife, had kept her for one whole year and had had a child by her. A fight ensued. Obi stood helpless at a distance, simply looking on. As there was no one to separate them, they fought and fought almost to the point of death. Exhausted, they both sat down to rest. Whereupon, Abemo called out to Ajo: "Why have we come to the boundary line between heaven and earth to fight? Why are we fighting at a spot where there is no reconciler? Obi must have come from me in heaven to you on earth to be your wife so that things might fall apart on earth and in heaven."

They saw reason and agreed to make peace. They also concerted to kill Obi who was the cause of the fight between them. So they did and left her dead body on a tree by the road side. Each went on his way back home.

On the third day, Orisa was passing by and saw the dead body of Obi perched on a branch. He revived the body and asked the woman what had happened. Obi told him. Orisa felt that in that case it would not help the relationship between the two men should he keep Obi alive. So he put her back in the bag where they kept her and left her dead on the tree by the roadside.

So now, we have an explanation of the custom of splitting the kila-nut (Obì) (((literally, the custom of killing Obì))) at a reconciliation gathering.

4.

The man who runs away when a fight is threatened is not a coward. The bee leaves some wax behind for a hive. The ant leaves grains of sand for a nest. This oracle came for the inhabitants of the earth and for the inhabitants of heaven when they threatened war against each other. The sacrifice was to be a bowl of honey and a bowl of corn-pap. Only the heaven dwellers offered this sacrifice; earth dwellers did not (Irete-'Sá).

Soon afterwards, the inhabitants of the earth decided to lay siege to heaven. On reaching the gate of heaven, they found bowls of corn-pap mixed with honey. Not realizing that there was poison also mixed up with each bowl of corn-pap, they greedily sat down to eat and drink. So they all died that night at the gate of heaven.

At day-break, the inhabitants of heaven saw the dead bodies of earth dwellers at the gate of heaven and were at first puzzled what to do. They eventually decided to select and revive seven dead bodies from the four corners of the camping ground of the earth dwellers. These seven were made to carry all the dead bodies away from the gate of heaven back to the earth, the inhabitants of heaven mocking them with a song:

"You tasted the honey,
That is why you couldn't fight against heaven;
You tasted the honey".

To this song of derision, the seven laboured hard and carried all the corpses away. That is why at a Yoruba funeral today, the corpse is carried round the village. It is the dead carrying the dead.

5.

"The-hill-rolls-down-into-the-stream" was the diviner who gave an oracle to earth dwellers and heaven dwellers as they were going out on a hunting expedition, when it was foreseen that there was going to be a dispute about seniority as regards how to share the only big rat they would kill on the hunt. Earth dwellers were warned to be very cautious in dealing withheaven dwellers; but earth dwellers refused to heed the advice, and a fight ensued. (Èjì-Ogbè).

It was the single animal (èkìrì or èdú) which the joint hunting expedition killed which led to a fight. Neither side would take only a part; each wanted the whole. Heaven men returned to heaven in anger and fury and left the game with earth men. On reaching heaven, they stopped the rain from falling. Crops on earth withered, men and animals started to go without food as there was a famine. In their extremity, earth men decided to return the game to heaven, and they went in search of someone to make the journey for them.

They seized on a pregnant woman, put the dead animal on her head and sent her on the way to heaven. On reaching there, Olodumare had pity on her for she could have died of weariness on the journey. Olódumare gave her a calabash of water to carry back with the instruction to pour it out on reaching the earth. She hardly got into her room when the baby arrived, and it was in the pool of the water which she brought from heaven that the baby was delivered. Her friends heard she had returned from heaven

and came to greet her "Welcome from heaven". They came and found the babe and had to greet her for the arrival of the baby too. The same greeting sufficed as appropriate for both.

At the birth of a child we look for water to bathe the child, but a child always brings plenty of water in the coming. And when a Yoruba woman newly delivered of a child is greeted, the greeting is "Welcome from heaven", which is a welcome for returning from the gate of death.

6.

Hǒ-hǒ-madé was the diviner who consulted the oracle for the Hawk; there were oracular messages in it also for the Egret and the Vulture. It was on the day when each of the three offered in jealous self-confidence to carry the sacrifice of earth-dwellers up to heaven. The Hawk started, went up a bit, got tired and fell back. The Egret suffered the same fate. Only the Vulture was able to take the sacrifice of earth dwellers up to high Heaven. (Ósá-'Wòri).

This is a continuation of the story of the woman who went to heaven to return the game which brought a tragedy on the earth. The water the woman brought back became rain, and it rained tumultously, so that there was a flood which extinguished fire from the earth. Men had no fire to cook. They then offered a sacrifice to get fire back from heaven. But they needed someone to carry the sacrifice away to heaven. The Hawk, the Egret, and the Vulture voluntered to serve. The Hawk was the first to start. Both the Hawk and the Egret failed. It was the Vulture which got the sacrifice to heaven. Fire was given him in a covered calabash with the instruction that the cal bash should not touch the ground until he reached the earth. The Vulture was very tired with the journey. On getting to a flat rock on the way, he decided to rest awhile. He put the calabash on the rock. Suddenly fire flared out of the calabash and blistered the Vulture's head.

Thus arose the saying "Poor vulture! it was a good turn he agreed to do, but he got a blistered head for it"

8.

(Note: for the antecedent of this story, see No. 12 below)

Olodumare with Orunmila locked themselves up together in a small room in heaven. All heaven asked curicusly and in consternation: "Who will open the door to let us in? Who will open the door for us?"

The duikar heard about it and he went straight to the door, attempting to open it. Orunmila answered from inside and asked "Who is that knocking at the door of Osin hard and long?" The duikar announced his identity. Then Orunmila answered back, "Etu, òbèjé, take heed, Olodumare would like you to go back. Or have you ever known, or have you ever gone into a small room in heaven before?" The duikar had to go back.

Edú heard about it and went to see if he could open the door, Orunmila asked him the same question. Edú, ibara, af'ija gb'oko was also turned away. So also was asked to go back.

Agbonrin heard and came. But he too, àgbònrín, òdógìjà, onilé afifen, was also turned away. So also was Ìrà olówó kansoso.

There was further the cry of despair in heaven, asking, "Who, for all we are worth, can open the door of Osin for us?" Then Edun (a species of monkey) offered to go. As he touched the door, Orunmila answered from inside as before, asking who. On being told that it was Edun, he insulted Edun, making fun of his face nad hands. Edun replied to him, "yes, my face is rough and ugly. And my eyes are sunken, but they are sharp enough to see a fruit high up on the tree. Yes, my hands are flappy, but they are firm enough and they plucked a fruit for Olofin himself to eat."

Orunmila was surprised to hear the reference and urged Edun not to tell the rest of the story. Thus was Edun able to open the door. Then in a weepy, plaintive tone of voice, he sang:

Ogijan, Edun is going with them:
I too, I Orijan,
Where they go, Edun will go. (Eji-Ogbe)

9.

One who returns thanks for the kindness of yesterday will redeive more kindness. This oracle was declared to Ori, the Head, when he was going into the company of the nether-earth spirits (irunmale) to split the kola-nut for kindness.

(Eji-Ogbe).

The story is that Olodumare one morning picked a choice kolanut and asked the Irunmale (nether Earth Divinities) if any of them could split it for him. First came Ogun, the god of iron; he tried and failed. So did all the other Irunmale, they all tried and failed. Then they sat down there wondering if anyone else would be able to accomplish what they had failed to acomplish. At that point, Ori, the Head, rolled along, stopped, took the kola-nut and split it, to everybody's amazement. Olodumare dongratulated the Head and made him chief above all the irunmale.

As it happened, the other irunmale became jealous of the Head and a fight ensued. In the fighting, none had strength enough to defeat the Head. He knocked them all down one by one and flung them in different directions as he knocked them down. Olota he flung to Ado town, Erinmi to Owo town, Pepe to Asin, Orisa to Itapa, Ogun to Ire, Obalufon to Iyinde, and Orunmila to Ile-Ife.

10.

Sese-oloro-sese. This oracle was declared to Orunmila when he was going to fight against all the kings of the earth. He defeated the Alafa and carried away all his goods. He defeated Ajero, and captured him with all his belongings. In the same way, he defeated all the other kings one by one, and started to go to Ewi next.

(Ose-Meji).

When the Ewi heard of the victories already won by Orunmila, he went and consulted the oracle for guidance as to what he could do so that Orunmila would not be able to defeat him. He was asked to offer the following: rat meat in plenty, fishes in plenty and one bottle of wine. He performed the ritual accordingly. As Orunmila approached, the Ewi presented the meat and the fish and the wine. Orunmila sat down and ate and drank to his heart's satisfaction. He became drunk after some time. As Orunmila was drunken, it was possible for Ewi to defeat him. So, the Ewi possess all the booty which Orunmila had captured from all the kings he had defeated. From that day and incident came the saying "No king as Ewi".

11.

Hold up a chain, and it stands up straight and stately release your hold on it, and it comes floppily down. This oracle was for Orunmila and all the irunmale. It happened that Olodumare got some loads ready and asked the irunmale to carry them to the earth. (Okanran-Eguntan).

Olodumare on that occasion sent a messenger to summon all the irunmale to him. None of them all except Orunmila gave the messenger any present, the customary gift acknowledging that the message was delivered (the ilohun). Orunmila gave him food and drink. He gave him a leg of chicken to take with him.

In return for Òrúnmila's kindness and thoughtfulness, the messenger told him secretly what Ọ̀lọ́dùmarè wanted them all for. It was to carry some bundles to the earth. But Òrúnmìlà should take the warning not to hurry to take one of the nearer bundles, rather, he should aim at getting at one in the bosom of Ọ̀lọ́dùmarè. When the day came and the irúnmalẹ̀ assembled, there was a stampede. This one got hold of a bundle of coins, that one a bundle of clothes, and so on. The messenger took position on a talking-drum, warning Òrúnmìlà with the drum to take his time and aim ultimately at getting the sack of heads close to Ọ̀lọ́dùmarè. After the others had left on their journey to the earth with their burdens of wealth and riches, Òrúnmìlà leisurely went closer to Ọ̀lọ́dùmarè and collected the more precious sack containing heads and made for the earth, following the others far behind. He overtook the other irúnmalẹ̀ as they stood on the boundary between heaven and earth. They could not go further because the earth was all covered with nothing but water.

Òrúnmìlà took out a mat from his sack and spread it on the waters. He dipped in again and brought out a handful of earth-dust which he sprinkled on the mat. Then for the third time he dipped in again and brought out a hen with five claws which he also placed on the mat. The chicken started to scratch the dust; and as the dust spread, the water receded and solid earth extended.

It was Òrúnmìlà, who made the solid earth, who first stepped on to it. The irúnmalẹ̀ had to deliver all that they brought from heaven to Òrúnmìlà, and he shared out to them just as it pleased him. Then Òrúnmìlà sang:

Look, how grand the earth is!
Being before and being after;
The earth itself in being.

12.

Ọ̀lọ́dùmarè was in dire need, and Òrúnmìlà too was in dire need. Ọ̀lọ́dùmarè divined for Òrúnmìlà and asked him to perform some ebọ rites. Òrúnmìlà himself divined for Ọ̀lọ́dùmarè and directed him similarly to perform some rites. The understanding was that the rites would help them respectively out of their straits. Each one of them duly performed the ebọ with a big goat and 22,000 cowries as prescribed for each by the other. (Èjì-Ogbè).

After they had both made the ebọ as required, they were both walking along together one day when they stumbled and fell together into a deep pit where they remained for many days, they became hungry because they could not get out by themselves. In this strait, Èjun, a type of monkey happened to be passing by and he saw them. He was shocked. Immediately, he climbed up the trees and plucked several fruits for them to eat. They ate, until they had enough strength to be helped out. Even when they were out, they were still dazed and weak and could not dare as before. Hence, they went and locked themselves up together in a small walled enclosure in heaven. (For the rest of the story, see 8 above).

13.

The wicked man was running away from the presence of Ọ̀lọ́dùmarè, even though Olodumare did not drive him away. Ọ̀lọ́dùmarè shouted to those standing around and asked that he be stopped and brought back. The wicked man ran faster, and there was none of the assembled irúnmalẹ̀ who could catch him or stop him until he was running passed Òrúnmìlà. It was Òrúnmìlà who there and then got hold of him and brought him back to Ọ̀lọ́dùmarè who commanded that the wicked man be taken into custody.

That was why Olódumare preferred Qrúnmila above all the other irunmale and gave him a status higher than theirs. From that day on, Qrúnmila was allowed to sit next to Olodumare who said to him: From this day on, you should feel free in my presence. For you no more fear, no more cringing when you come into my presence" (Èjì-Ogbè).

14.

The wind above causes a rumbling to the leaves on the tree. The storm rustles the leaves of the coco-nut palm and shakes them high and low, here and there. That is the oracle spoken to Qrúnmila when all the irúnmalè plotted against him so that they dug underground through his wall from outside to reach his ipòrín which he positioned in his room. (Irosù-'Sá).

Qrúnmila did not know early that there was a plot being hatched against him. But he got to know on the occasion when he made an ebo of a he-goat as he had previously been directed and had to dig under his ipòrín to bury the head of the he-goat there in completion of this ritual which he performed on behalf of his ipòrín. It was then that he discovered that a hole had been dug in there from outside. Qrúnmila hastily removed his Igba-Ipòrín and located it elsewhere in the house. He then went on and completed his rites. No sooner than he had finished the ritual that the rain started to fall. It rained heavily and long. Qrúnmila did not know that all the irunmale had congregated in the hole leading in from outside. The flood ran into the hole dug and all the irunmale were killed by the flood which rushed into the hole which they themselves dug when they plotted against Qrúnmila.

15.

Kákáká is the oracle for Kámika. Kákáká is the oracular message for Kámika. This was the oracle for Qrúnmila on the occasion when Òrisà left a poisoned bait for him by the isín of Akee Apple tree.

It happened that the children of Qrúnmila and those of Òrisà were in the habit of going together to pluck and eat the fruit of the Akee Apple tree. Like all village children, where they pluck-ed the fruit, there they would eat it. On one particular occasion, Òrisà got it into his head that he would do something to cause Qrúnmila some pain and sorrow. So, he went and planted a poisonous bait by the isín tree, warning his own children to keep away from the tree on that particular day. Qrúnmila did not know this. But as his custom was, he consulted his Ipòrín at day-break, and he was given the Odù Ogbè-'Ká as the oracle for the day. From the Odù, he knew that something was going to happen by a tree where he or his children or some other members of his household might be plucking some fruit. So he warned his children not to go near the Akee Apple tree on that day. Qrúnmila's children heard and obeyed, but Òrisà's children who had been earlier warned by their father did not obey. They went to the tree and ate the poisoned fruit. When Òrisà went and identified the corpses of his dead children under the Akee Apple tree, he moaned and cried in anguish that the poison which he planted for someone else had killed his own children after all.

16.

Oyigi was the oracle for Oyigi. Oyigi was the oracle for Oyigi. The manner of separture would give a clue as to who were elders and chiefs of the Ilesi rank. This was the oracle for Osanyin at the time when he betted it out with Qrunmila that no one could make a fool of him. (Okànràn-'Túrùpòn).

The story was that Òsányìn and Òrúnmìlà sat down one day to a friendly conversation and each started to contest he was wiser than the other. Òrunmila did not deny Òsányin's wisdom, but simply retorted that in spite of Òsányin's acclaimed wisdom he, Òrúnmila, could make him an element in somebody's ẹbọ, ritual. What one affirmed, the other denied and contested. They betted on it and agreed that the loser would from that day be regarded as junior and servant to the other.

On the day following, Ọlọ́fin came to Òrúnmìlà to consult the Ifá oracle. Òrunmila divined, and out came the Odù Òkànràn-'túrùpọn. Òrúnmila, in interpreting it to Ọlọ́fin, predicted that a bundle of fire-wood he brought to Ọlọ́fin s house that day, and directed that the firewood must be used in an ẹbọ ritual. Ọlọ́fin laughed it off for no one ever brought a bundle of firewood near Ọlọ́fin s abode, it was taboo. Òrunmila counselled that Ọlọ́fin should set a watch on every approach to the palace of Ọlọ́fin. And it was done.

Now it happened that one of the wives of Ọlọ́fin whom the Ọlọ́fin had rarely visited but who had simply been left by herself in seclusion in the apartment provided for her by Ọlọ́fin got fed up with herself and secretly left for the bush to commit suicide by hanging. On getting into the bush, she met Òsanyin who had gone there to fetch some firewood. A conversation and love-making ensued, the woman's first real experience of sexual relationship.. She pleaded with Òsanyin to come with her back into her room in the palace, that she would hide him in her room which her husband in any case had never visited. They contrived that Òsanyin should hide in the bundle of firewood and the woman would that way carry him in. Òsányìn agreed to co-operate. Unfortunately, she fell into the hands of the guards who summarily took the bundle of sticks from her and carried it to Ọlọ́fin who at that time had Òrunmila sitting with him there.

Ọlọ́fin was surprised and highly impressed, and he quickly went in to bring presents and pledges for Òrúnmìlà. While Ọlọ́fin was away, Òsányìn started to whisper from among the bundle of sticks, acknowledging Òrúnmìlà's wisdom, vision and superiority, and pleading that Òrúnmìlà should work some facesaving devices to get him out of his trouble. Ọlọ́fin returned and presented his gifts of appreciation and thanks pleading that the ẹbọ ritual be proceeded with without delay. Òrunmila broke off a few ends from the sticks and used those bits as part of the ritual. Then he asked that the bundle itself should be carried after him to his house. This was done, and Òrúnmìlà was left alone with the bundle of firewood and, of course, with Òsanyin panting away inside the bundle. Òrunmila cut the bundle loose and Òsányìn submitted himself humbly to Òrúnmìlà and promised to be his servant from that day on.

17.

Òrunmila says "Àjàmbete" and I reply "Àjàmbete". Then he says "the front legs of bush mice sound 'mésewá'; and also the wings of little birds sound 'mésewá'". This is the oracle for all the trees in the forest on the day when they had to carry gifts and offerings up to heaven, with Òrunmila following them from behind, carrying nothing, taking no gift. (Ìrọ̀sùn'Sá).

Each of the ìrúnmalè had a tree sacred to it. The palmtree, for example, is specially sacred to Òrúnmìlà. On a day when the trees took presents to Olódumarè and the palm-tree carried none, the other trees were eager to make their presentations and to point out to Olódumarè that Òrúnmìlà brought nothing. But Olódumarè answered them "Ai Òrúnmìlà had previously completed dues. He had.

He had. They felt ashamed. Òrúnmìlà returned from heaven rejoicing, with dancing and singing. This was his song:

All the trees dropped their leaves,
All of them, save one;
The palm-tree alone kept its leaves,
The palm-tree becomes an evergreen.

18.

Against him whose lot is to prosper, the machinations of man are all in vain. This was the oracle for Qrunmila when he and Ẹ̀ṣù were to co-operate together in a joint business ventures. Ẹ̀ṣù was determined to work under all circumstances against any chance of Qrunmila's success and eventual prosperity. (Ọ̀wọ́nrín-méjì).

According to this story, Qrunmila saved up to a hundred and twenty thousand cowries of shell currency. Ẹ̀ṣù asked that this should be entrusted to him and he would trade with it on behalf of Qrunmila. But because his motives were not pure, Ẹ̀ṣù went and bought an old woman to be a slave for Qrunmila. The woman died in a few days' time soon after she was brought in. Orunmila persuaded himself to bear it meekly. He buried the old woman and marked the grave.

But it so happened that the old woman was the mother of both the King of Benin and the King of Qyq. Both kings, on being told that their mother had been caught by marauders and sold to slave-dealers, started a thorough search for her, ready to pay any amount, no matter how high, to buy her back, living or dead. And so it was that when it was finally established that it was Qrunmila who bought their mother and had given her a decent burial when she died, they paid him an exceedingly handsome amount of money so that they could have the remains of their mother. So, it became a principle of life enshrined in this saying: "Against him whose lot is to prosper, the machinations of man are all in vain."

19.

When things came to a pretty poor pass in Ifẹ̀, when the people's life was broken life a calabash, a message was sent to the King of Ọ̀tà in Ado town to help set things right in Ifẹ̀. He came, tried and failed. A similar message went to Ẹ̀rinmi of Ọ̀wọ̀; he came and tried but failed. A other message went to Pepe in the town Ìsìn. He also tried but failed. So also Ọ̀gun from Irè, and Ọ̀awọ̀deri the diviner in Imọ̀jùbi. They all came but had to acknowledge their incompetence to help restore prosperity in Ife. Then the message went to Á-ti-kékeré-s'ọ̀gbọ́n (He-who-is-acclaimed-to-be-wise-from-infancy). He came, and directed that the leaf Olúsùwàlù, the leaf which binds existence together, the leaf which intergrates being, should be brought. But no one knew where and how to get this important leaf. The people humbly acknowledged their utter helplessness; whereupon Qrunmila removed his cap from his head and produced from inside it a quantity of this precious leaf. He used it as part of a ritual which produced the desired result, and Ife became prosperious back again. The birds flew back into their nests, young animals went back into their holes, and the fishes returned to the depths of the rivers. Both man and animal shared the new prosperity. (Ìrọ̀sù-méjì.).

20.

There is a cassava tree in Ifẹ̀, only an old person can climb it. All the Irunmalẹ̀ have tried, but they have not been able to climb it. There is a dog there, scaring away those who may like to climb it. There is a big ram there, threatening to fight anyone who dares to come near. There is a snake moving around there, frightening away venturing ones.

.../.

The tree bears money for fruit, and carries precious beads on its bark, half-way up round it are jewels galore. Only Qrunmila who knows the appropriate rituals which is powerful enough in its efficacy will be able to climb it. (Irete-meji).

Qrunmila did not go in those days, and he climbed it sucessfully. On getting ready to go to attempt to climb the cassava tree, Qrunmila consulted his inqrin, his Head, to investigate what he needed to do so that he could climb the tree which others had not been able to climb. The oracle directed him to offer a sacrifice one big wrap of corn-meal, one big calabash full of yam-peelings, one live rat, and one ear of corn. Qrunmila obeyed, carried all these with him to the tree. On getting there, the watch-dog barked, and Qrunmila threw the wrap of corn-meal (àkàsù - ekq) at the dog; the bir-ram essayed to fight, and Qrunmila offered it the yam-peelings; the snake snarled at him but he threw the mouse toward it; the cock tried to pick at him, but Orunmila offered the cock the ear of corn. While they were all eating the food given them, Qrunmila climbed the tree unmolested. The cock was the first to note that Qrunmila was not the top of the tree and it crew, saying, "Qrunmila is up on the cassava tree-e-e-e-e-e-e". That is what the cock crows from that time to this.

21.

Fire, the diviner of Òjógbó; The Sun; the diviner of Òjogbo; The Moon, the diviner of Alátanṣére; and the Rain-Storm, the diviner in the depths of heaven. These four, Fire, The Sun, the Moon and Rain-Storm had a grouse against Qrunmila and concerted together to go and fight him. (Ogbè-'Sá).

When Qrunmila heard about the plot of the four against him, he consulted his oracle (his Head). He was instructed to prepare four bowls of pounded-yam and three plates of stew and put these by the side of the road along which his enemies would come to his house. And Qrunmila did as he was directed. Fire was the first to get to the food, and he took one bowl of pounded yam and one bowl of stew to accompany it. The Sun came next, and did the same. So also did the Moon which came after them. There was left only one bowl of pounded yam without stew. Rain-Storm came, and on finding that he would have to eat his pounded yam without stew, he got angry about the selfishness and inconsiderateness of his colplotters. So he pursued them in his fury. He over-took them one by one, and killed each of them (literally quenched them or cast himself over them). Thus the plot against Orunmila failed and led to the destruction of the plotters themselves.

22.

This story concerns Igba Emí. Emí is unripe farm-crops. Igba Emí is 200 assortment of such unripe farm-crops. These Igba Emi went round killing farmers, traders, market-keepers, and all other such enterprisers. Then they wanted to kill Qrunmila. As his habit was, Qrunmila had consulted his oracle, and he was directed to offer a quantity of wine which would be mixed up with some preparation for him to leave at the back of his house. (Ogbe-'Sa).

It was the habit of these Emí to go about not in company but in singles. So the Emí came to Qrunmila one by one, and on the arrival of each, he would be directed by Qrunmila to go to the back of the house to drink the wine of hospitality. Each one who drank of the portion died and was quickly removed to be roasted for food. So they all died, and Qrunmila celebrated the defeat of his enemies with a dance-song:

...../

Two hundred spirits ranged against Olofin,
Crushed are they, each one, crushed.
I've tied up the hands of the spirits,
Crushed are they, each one, crushed
Carry on, death, kill them one and all,
Crushed are they, each one, crushed.

23.

You greet me cheerfully, then I greet you cheerfully. This oracle was said to Orunmila when the ordeal fire was going to be prepared for the nether-earth spirits (irúnmalẹ) at the back of the house of Ajaruwa in Ife-L'Agbo. Orunmila was asked to make an ẹbọ with two chickens, two kegs of water, plus four thousand cowries (i.e. 2,000 x 2). He complied . (Irẹtẹ-Ogúntán).

The ordeal fire in this story was one of the ways in which the inhabitants of Old Ile-Ife ascertained which nether-earth-spirits (imalẹ) deserved to be venerated. A competing imalẹ would be asked to dance in the presence of admiring and wondering Ife inhabitants round the fire straight across to the other side without falling into the fire or being burnt at all. Achievement would be acclaimed, and acclamation would lead to veneration. The song for dancing round the fire was:

It is burning,
Let's see who can dance through it.
The flame is dancing,
Let's see who else can dance!

On the specific occasion under consideration, the contending irúnmalẹ one after the other took their turns, and each fell into the fire. Then came the turn of Orunmila, who had consulted the oracle and had been instructed to make an ebo as above. He carried one keg of water on one shoulder, and the second on the other shoulder. As he jumped across the fire, he dropped the kegs of water on the fire, so that he was not hurt. For this, the Ife people acclaimed him with singing: "Only you, Orunmila was able to quench the ordeal fire; Only you".

24.

The great young geniuses and the great adult geniuses it was who consulted the oracle for Orunmila. It was these babalawo who warned Orunmila that he was next to be tested whether he would be able to give the name of the Year had been killed by Death one after another. Orunmila consulted his oracle as to how to avoid falling victim to Death. He was instructed to mould a clay image and make its teeth of melon seeds and work into the image the power to act and speak as might be instructed. Orunmila did accordingly. (Ìdí-'Gbè).

There was a belief that at the end of a passing year, succeeding years would come in a procession from heaven to earth, and each would put the mark of death on the men whom each of them would have to kill later. Those who were marked by This Year would have to die this year. Those who were marked by Next Year would have to die next year; each year working in competition to mark his own victim. No man would know when his turn would come until death would suddenly turn up depending on the Year which had marked the person as his own victim.

When the years were proceeding to Orunmila's house, they found the image he left by the roadside with white sparkling teeth. They asked jokingly, "Sparkling Teeth, would you have some kola nut to eat?". Whereupon the image answered in reply, "I have white sparkling teeth, yes, but I use them to eat kola-nut of human flesh.

.../ ?

But that is what you would do, you This Year,....."The Years were startled that someone like that knew their names and could reprimand them in such an imperious way. So they quickly ran back and they could not get into Orunmila's house to mark him for death. Hence the saying, "No one is ever killed by the Year he can name. A person can be killed only by the Year whose name he does not know".

25.

O that one who travels may not travel in a canoe being paddled by the wicked! This oracle was given to Orunmila at a time when Olofin laid a plot to test Orunmila and was determined to do Orunmila harm should he fail the test. Olofin made a mortar out of a piece of yam, made a canoe out of some water-yam, carved out an ẹjija out of the omodun tree, and a grain of corn he made into an alufin odide. When Olofin was asked why he made these things, he said he wanted to trick Orunmila and kill him. Why? Because Orunmila had almost impoverished him completely, frequently taking away Olofin's possessions whenever he came to consult the oracle for him. (Iwòrì-Ègùtán).

Olófin put all the carvings he made into a big calabash and put the lid on. Then he sent a message to Orunmila to come and consult his oracle to declare what was inside the covered calabash. Olofin boasted quite a lot as he put the lid on this calabash as to what it would mean for Orunmila should he fail to identify the contents. The wives of Olofin were so concerned for Orunmila who, after all had been of a lot of help to them whenever they had difficult child-deliveries. So they sent a secret message to him suggesting that he should pass by the back of their house on his way to Olofin. He did so; and as he passed by, he heard them singing, the words of the song giving him a clue as to what Olofin had in the covered calabash.

E -e - e- e
Someone has made a mortar out of a piece of yam;
E - e - e-e
A canoe has been carved out of some water-yam;
E - e - e-e
An elija is made out of omolún tree;
E - e - e - e
Alufín odíde out of a grain of corn;
E - e - e - e

Orunmila was grateful for this helpful information and went confidently to the test-parade.

Orunmila was immediately put to the test as soon as he arrived at Olofin's. Calmly, he asked Olofin what oracle was revealed in his divination that morning. On being told that it was Iwòrì-Ègùntán, Orunmila started to quote the stanza at the beginning of this story. Olofin was frightened to hear this. So, he asked immediately what sacrifice he needed to offer. Orunmila demanded a goat, thirty-two thousand cowries, and two big pieces of cover-cloth of high cost, as sacrifice against sudden death. These things were produced without much delay. Then Orunmila cut in and asked for sacrifice against witchcraft, one big bush rat (ewúsa), twenty thousand cowries, two more pieces of cover-cloth. As these were being laid down, Orunmila cut in again and prescribed a sacrifice for long life uninterrupted by any unwise kingly decisions which could have tragic repercussions: a sheep, thirty-two cowries, five pieces of some high quality of cover cloth. They were similarly produced with all speed, and with Olofin praying hard and fast that Orunmila might not go further on demanding more in sacrifice. It was only by paying heavily for it that Olofin got himself released from the penalty for daring to put Orunmila to the test as he had done.

...../

Orunmila on another occasion consulted the oracle and Irete-Okanran appeared. He was warned to perform a rite so that he might not be tricked into eating poisoned food at a rally of diviners (babalawo). So, Orunmila made a ritual of a goat and thirty-two cowries to ward off unforseen evil, and then he proceeded on his way to Olofin's house. On his arrival at Olofin's house, Orunmila was offered some corn-beer mixed with some poison. He refused to drink it, quoting Irete-Okanran and singing:

What is this in the keg that is bubbling over?
There is poison in the keg that bubbles over;
Irete-Okanran, The oracle has warned,
Irete-Okanran. We don't drink of this.

The merriment proceeded. Drinks were being passed round again and Orunmila was offered some palm-wine similarly poisoned. This also he refused, singing a similar song. He left the party and went to his house. He was not there when the party was over and the group departed.

Not long afterwards, a child of Olofin's fell ill. All the babalawo except Orunmila were invited to help. They asked for ritual articles in fours, and Olofin complied. As the child did not improve, Olofin proposed that Orunmila also might be called in, but the other babalawo decided not to invite Orunmila. They gave the father further assurances that his child would recover. Eventually, however, the child died on the third day. Olofin was furious that the rivalry among the babalawo had resulted in the death of his son. He decided to take it as an opportunity to demonstrate to the general public the gross incompetence of these men as diviners and the superior excellence of Orunmila over them. He also ought to punish them severely for the death of his son. He decided not to announce the child's death, but rather he made a feast on the following day and invited the general public and the babalawo along. He cut and placed the head of the dead child in a big bowl and arranged portions of pounded yam rolled up on top of the head. From this bowl he asked the babalawo to help themselves to pound yam. Unaware of what was at the bottom of the bowl, they helped themselves generously to first and second helpings. Olofin then called their attention to the fact that Orunmila was not at the feast, and asked that he should be specially invited to join the party.

Orunmila consulted his oracle whether or not to go and as to what to do should he have to go. Irete-Okanran was the oracle which appeared, and the warning was that he should take care what to eat before nightfall that day, otherwise he might eat something that was not fitting. He went to the party and was invited to help himself from the bowl of pounded yam. Orunmila stopped and gazed, and pondered and answered:

What is this in the bowl?
It looks very much like a top skinned by the "world",
The contents look very much like bits of human flesh;
Irete-Okanran, This is forbidden food,
Thanks to Irete-Okanran.

As he said this, he walked away and sat among the babalawo. Olofin was amazed and frightened. He asked Orunmila to prescribe an appropriate ritual. He then took out and showed to the babalawo and the rest of the assembled crowd the head of the dead child, whose death the other babalawo had not been able to predict, prevent or discover. Then he gave instruction that they all of them be locked up in jail. So, Orunmila became a chosen confidant and the undisputed diviner for Olofin.

...../

27.

Orunmila was going on a long journey and was to leave his wife. Onipuna, behind, He consulted the oracle and Otura-meji appeared. He went. Soon after he left home, the Iwarefa ile (members of the Council of Six Elders in the town) assaulted and defiled his wife, and to cover it up, sold her into slavery. They then made a mound to show to Orunmila to be the grave of his wife who died when he was away. On the day that he came back, they ran to meet him, broke the news of her death, and sought to console him. On the following day, Orunmila got up early, performed necessary ritual ablutions and proceeded to consult his oracle to enquire how he could find another such a beautiful and helpful woman as wife. And Otura-meji appeared again. The oracle was interpreted to mean that Onipuna was still his wife and would remain faithful to him till old age. This puzzled Orunmila and he tried again. The oracle replied in the same way. So Orunmila proceeded to investigate what ritual he should perform, and he was directed to offer one goat and one big fish to sacrifice to his Head. So he called two of his servants, Amosu, and Amere, and sent them to buy the choicest fish they could possibly get from the fisherman, Otosu, by the big river. On arrival there, they rejected all the smaller fishes on display and asked if they could get a very big one for which they could pay a very high price. Such a fish was brought and they paid what was asked for, even without the customary bargaining to lower the price. On getting the money, the fisherman added his wife to go out and have a look at those men who would only buy the choicest fish and who had paid cash down on quoted price without bargaining. To her and their surprise, the woman was Onipupa, Orunmila's wife who was announced dead, and she also recognised them as the servants of her previous husband, Orunmila. But both she and they kept the secret. They returned to tell Orunmila about her, and he arranged that she should be bought back privately and brought back to him. She returned and related all that happened to her when her husband was away, and how she was sold away by members of the Council of Six Elders.

Orunmila decided on a big party to celebrate his return home and invited the elite in the community. He dressed himself up gorgeously, and loud was the acclamation of delight when he appeared. Then the wife, Onirupa, similarly dressed, quietly appeared, all smiles and courtesy, carrying drinks which she respectfully placed before the invited guests. She went back in and again emerged with palmwine and kola-nuts. Back she went again, and came out carrying dainties of different kinds for the party. The iwarefa who had assaulted her were flabbergasted. They got up one by one and went to their homes. When they came back eventually, they each brought a goat, twelve thousand cowries, and a basketful of kola-nuts to ask for Orunmila's forgiveness. Orunmila then asked them why they first ran away in the first instance, and they replied:

> The wine we saw in front of us was accusing,
> The Kola-nuts we could read raised questions about character.
> The palm-wine paid before us presented issues innumerable.

All the offending elite then knelt before Orunmila, begging for forgiveness. And from that time, Orunmila assumed full control, both moral and political, over the ruling elite of the community.

.../

Ori-si-ta-si was Olofin's hunter
Ori-si-ta-si, another hunter of Olofin
Atamatase, Yet another hunter of Olofin
Ori-si-ta-si went into the forest and shot at an elephant
Ori-si-ta-si went and shot at an antelope

Atamatase also went and shot at a tiger.

The elephant shot at by Ori-si ran round the forest in pain from the gun-shot and finally came and fell down dead in the front of Olofin's house. Olofin's men opened the inside of the elephant and found there a mysterious calabash with lid sealed on. The antelope shot at by Ori-si ran round and ultimately came and died at the back of Olofin's house. Inside the antelope was found a small babe yet undelivered. As for the tiger shot by Atamatase, it came and died straight on the door-steps of the house of Olofin, and inside it were found sixteen palm-nuts for divination.

Olofin invited all the diviners in his realm to consult the oracle for him. Fifteen of them came, tried all they could, but none could find a clue to the mysteries inside the animals. Olofin noted them down as failures and pointed out that there was one diviner missing. He asked who it was that was missing. It was Egutan-meji the diviner in Ode Idere Olofin. Olofin sent a message that Egutan-meji should come to him urgently.

Ogunda-meji was the oracular sign which Egutan had in his morning divination on the day that he was to get the message that he was wanted by Olofin. He had been instructed to kill a chicken over the ensign of his Head, not to eat the legs and wings of the chicken but to put them in his bag together with three wraps of agili corn-meal and give them all to anyone in need whom he might meet on his way out on that day. It was predicted that if he did this, his visit that day would ,make him prosperous. Egutan heard and obeyed. On his way going to the Olofin, he met three virgins washing clothes at the brook he was to cross. The name of one was Aboru. They were all daughters of Olofin but no one knew yet that they would all be Egutan's wives.

Egutan saw these girls was attracted to them and stopped to have a chat with them. In the conversation, he discovered that their father had been very restless and touchy all day and had sent them to the brook to wash clothes without remembering to give them their midday meal. Egutan immediately took out the food in his bag and offered it to the girls. They ate it and enjoyed it very much. They were satisfied and happy and the conversation became freer and loving. In the course of the conversation, they gave a lot of information about their family affairs, including the story of the hunters and the animals they shot and the mysterious finds which were discovered inside the animals. They also told him about the fifteen diviners already locked up in a dungeon by their father, and concerning one of the wives of Olofin who had been labouring to deliver for three days already. They even promised to be his wives and suggested that he should ask their father to give them to him for wives.

Egutan went on and got to Olofin's house where he was asked to consult the Ifa oracle without delay and interpret whatever message he had for Olofin. Egutan proceeded to consult immediately and out came the ensign of Ogunda-meji again. "Ha!", he exclaimed, "here we have three hunters who have each killed a mysterious animal. Let the first animal be cut open and a sealed calabash will be found inside it.

The calabash should be taken out. And there is a woman under labour. She should be carried to the front of Ọlọfin's house and her stomach should be touched with the calabash from inside the elephant. We predict a safe delivery for the woman". Ọlọfin heard this and trembled. It was done, and the woman gave birth to her child immediately.

Ègútán then continued; "We direct that the second animal be cut; inside it shall be found a small babe wrapped up in the womb. This should be taken out and buried in the ground at the place where Ọlọfin usually takes his bath. If he washes himself on that spot for the next seven days, he will escape sudden death which otherwise might come on the seventh day". Ọlọfin gave instruction that is be done with speed.

"Then", continued Egutan, "the third animal shouted similarly be cut, and inside it will be found sixteen palm-nuts for divination. These should be kept in a specially prepared calabash with lid, and Ọlọfin should sacrifice to it annually".

"And there are some fifteen prisoners locked up somewhere in a dungeon. They are to be released to me. Oh, I see death. I can see death coming along". On hearing all these, Ọlọfin started to get ill with nervousness. His relatives prostrated themselves before Egutan and begged him to prescribe appropriate rituals to ward off the death threat over Ọlọfin.

"There are some three girls at the brook at the back of Ọlọfin's house. Let them be bathed and dressed up. Let their father hand them over to the oracle, together with three goats and 32,000 (2,000x16) Cowries. This is to ward off Ọlọfin's death".

Without any hesitation, everything was done as Ègútán directed; nothing was left undone. The fifteen diviners and the three girls were taken along behind Ègútán as he returned to his house. When they arrived there, he granted the fifteen diviners their freedom and asked them to go back each to his own home. They were amazed as they had thought that Ègútán would automatically make them his household servants. But if he was willing to release them as he offered, what annual or periodic tribute would he require of them? Nothing! They were stunned with amazement. They pointed out to him that if he had not saved them, they would have been killed by Ọlọfin. He had saved them from death, couldn't he see that they belong to him? Egutan then answered and said that in token of their appreciation, all he would require would be a simple ceremony whenever any one of them was about to slaughter an animal. On placing the knife on the throat of the animal victim, the person should first say "It is Ègútán-méjì who kills you".

As for the three virgins, Ègútán-méjì kept them as his wives. But he kept in remembrance the help they rendered him on the day he was going to consult the oracle for their father, so, early in the morning on the day following that on which they came to live with him and every day afterwards, he greeted them thus:
"My Praise to Àbọrú, My Praise to Àbọyè, My Praise to Àbọsẹ"
That is why every babalawo says that every morning.

29.

Amọfá (the one who claims to know Ifá) ran off and hid himself in the forest. He was walking stealthily around in the bush soon after he got there he met a hunter who had lost his way in the forest. The hunter pleaded with him to show the way back to the town. Amofá did. Then he walked further on and saw an old woman standing by her load of firewood, waiting for someone to join her lift it from the ground and help to put it on her head for carrying home.

.....

The old woman asked for Amqfá's help, but Amqfá answered rather impatiently that he had his own load of fear and anxiety on his mind and it would be unwise for him to keep stopping to help other people, otherwise he might be overtaken by those whom the town-people might send to look round for him and bring him back into the town to be killed. The old woman asked for further details and Amofa talk his story. Whereupon the old woman calmed him down by explaining that she had death under her control and that it was she who had been responsible for the death of the previous kings of Òfà. If the man stopped to help her, he needed not to worry concerning death.

Amofá stopped and helped the woman. He even undertook to carry the bundle of firewood to the town for the old woman. On the way, as they were walking home, the old woman instructed Amofa what to do. He should return home confidently, invite the children of Olófin and ask them to dig the ground on the grave of Olófin. If they dug roughly where the head of the dead body lay, and where the stomach and feet respectively lay, they would find at each point a big clay pot like that which a woman uses to store her drinking water in the house. The pots, however, would be filled with blood, being the blood which had been drained from each Olofa and which had been responsible for their death. The pots should be carefully excavated, and some blood from each pot should be sprinkled on the dying Olófa's head, stomach and feet respectively. New life would come into his body and he would be well again.

Amqfá was very happy. He thanked the woman profusely, went to his house and did as he was directed. The remaining Olófa regained his health and escaped death.

30.

Awó-ju-awo-lo was the diviner who consulted the oracle for Ajíbowú, the son of the blacksmith located on the upper part of the market-place. Ajíbowú was very ill. He had aches all over the body. He could not move his arms, he could not move his legs.

The ritual he was asked to perform was one he-goat. He did perform the first, and then again the second time. He killed the first he-goat and ate it all by himself. He did it the second time and again he was the only one who ate the meat himself.

Then Awó-ju-awo-lo, the diviner, looked in again and consulted the oracle. The ensign which appeared was Ogbè-'Sa. And the ritual prescribed consisted of the following: one he-goat and 1,800 cowries (200 x 9). The ritual animal was to be divided into nine parts and placed in nine pieces of broken calabash. The head of the he-goat with 200 cowries to go into one piece of broken calabash for the sake of Ajíbowu's head, the neck of the he-goat with 200 cowries for Ajíbowú's head, and similarly the two shoulders one by one, and the hip.

Ajíbowú heard and obeyed. He left the ritual be performed meticulously as prescribed. And on the following day, he was able to get up, hale and healthy. Then filled with emotion, he started to sing his song of joy:

My head which ached yesterday does not ache today
Àsùrùdù olúlù, Eh, some diviners are wiser than others.
My neck which ached yesterday does not ache today
Àsùrùdù olúlù, Eh, some diviners are wiser than others,
My arm which ached.....

So he sang of each part of the body, declaring them all healthy (Ogbè-'Sa.).

31.

Knowing-the-technique is the diviner for El'Éká Not-knowing-the-technique is the diviner of On'Ikànranmú. The wind.....

An oracular message was given to Qrunmila, demanding that he should offer a sacrifice. In answering, he asked, "have you ever declared an oracle to anyone who later found it propitious?" They said "Yes, it was we who consulted the oracle for the hen which was once made an ebo to Èsù and was later found with many chicks of her own following her round".

Qrunmila snapped his fingers in contempt shouting "Never! Not me, the illustration you've quoted is that of a bird. I wouldn't associate myself with a bird to perform an ẹbọ together"

Knowing-the-technique- is the diviner of El'Éká
Not-knowing-the-technique is the dyviner of On'Ikàranmu.

The wind .....

They said "Yes, it was we who divined for the king of Ila when he had a sore foot, so sceptic that he could not go out, condined to his house for so long that although he had things he could set to make money yet he became poor, was so poor that he had to beg sacrifice of three goats. He did. Then, he became exceptionally prosperous. He ranked very high among other kings and had free access to the Qlófin.

Qrunmila broke in "Vell that befits me. Prescribe a ritual and I will perform it". (Òguda-'Sà).

33.

Qrunmila says 'Álugbóhun' (When beathen, it gives a sound). I repeated it and answered Álugbóhun'.

Then he said, when they beat the child of Ogun, did n't we hear Ogun speak?" I said 'Yes, Ògun certainly spoke up".

Qrunmila says Alugbohun, I repeated it and answered 'Álugbóhun' He asked 'when Qbalufon's child was beaten, did n't we hear Qbalufon say something?' 'Yes" I replied, "Qbalufon certainly spoke.

He asked if any one should beat the child of me Qrunmila. Should n't I speak? And I replied, Yet, you are right to speak out.

So Qrunmila answered.
Then, Agbe, the Carrier carry my voice to the seas,
And you, Aluko, please carry my voice to the lagoon.
Iriyanrinyanrin, do carry my voice to the highest heaven
May what I say today be fulfilled, all through
What I say today will be fulfilled, for sure,

34.

The cloth (Qdún) becomes torn and tattered first in the sleeves, then in the legs, then all over.

This was the oracle for Qrunmila. Once upon a time there was a wholesale plot against him so much so that it was only Edun of all his friends who remained loyal to him.

The cloth becomes torn and tattered first in the sleeves, then in the legs, then all over. This was the oracle for Edun on the day when that wholesale plot was hatched against Qrunmila that they seized the Image of Qrunmila's Head and dumped it in the depths of the sea and Qrunmila had to send Edun to go to heaven and get a replacement for Him. (Oguda-'Sà)

The antagonism against Orunmila was so much that when men and beasts learn that he had successfully persuaded Edun to go to heaven to obtain a substitute Calabash of Ifá, they went and pleaded with the trees in the neighbouring of their town to join in the plot and thus make it possible for Edun to find a suitable place to alight on when he would be descending from heaven. The idea was that on condition that Edun could not alight on a tree, it would be possible for them to intercept him on his way to Orunmila's house and force him to surrender to them the Ifa Calabash he might bring back from heaven. They were able to get all the trees save one to their side. It was the palm-tree in front of Orunmila's house.

On his way back from heaven, Edun was amazed to find the earth all vacant, without any trees or shrubs, except the palm tree in front of the house of Orunmila. When he sighted that tree, he came direct over it, held the calabash with both arms close to his chest, lowered above the tree for a moment, then let himself go. Although he did not miss the palm tree, the pressure of descent was so much that the calabash got broken and the divination-nuts inside were scattered all over. He was so grieved at this that he started to wail, saying, "Hah, Existence is lost, it is all scattered; existence is lost" But he possessed a presence of mind, and he started at once to pick up the nuts which were scattered about. One by one, he picked them all up.

"It's not bad after all.
I have got the nuts all the same
I picked them all up
This is not bad at all" he sang

Thus, Orunmila was able to replace the divinatory nuts which his enemies stole. On the fifth day after he got them, he made a big feast and decked out the nuts in another calabash. His enemies (the men) were filled with shame and fear as they came to do obeisance to him. But as for the beasts, they were still filled with jealousy and contempt.

Orunmila decided that he would have to do something to frighten the animals. When he had decided on a night when to cause this fright, he fore warned Edun that something strange was going to happen, and that Edun needed not fear. Rather, he should put on a bold voice and a bold face. By midnight, Orunmila stretched his medicated staff to the hill by the sea, and a big boulder from the hill rolled down and fell into the sea with a big splash and thundering. The earth shook, and all the beasts were afrighted. The elephant ran and lost its tusk, the bush-cow ran and got itself wedged between tree trunks falling on one another. The beasts of the field died in their thousands. Only Edun was not frightened that night. Rather than run, he simply answered with confidence and pride.

Who is there to frighten an Orisa?
Who dares?
I'd cut off his head with a cutlass,
I'd break his head into pieces
That is what the Colobos Monkey cries till today.

Láyímiká (Honour surrounds me) is the oracle for Òré
Èrè (Profit, Benefit) is the oracle for marshy ground near a stream.
Gbódúnró-Gbódúnfò (Hold up the Year-Release the Year) is the oracle for òtùrò (rain?) (òtòòròò)

The oracle is for the inhabitants of Ifà Òyè'làgbò when they jointly drove Orunmila out into the bush.

Soon after the obeisance which the humans did for Orunmila in story 34 above, it became evident that their submission to him was not whole-hearted. The relationship became so strained that ultimately he was driven out of the town. They alleged that he was causing a lot of trouble that he would first of all cause some confusion and then present himself as the knowledgeable one to set things right again. They were sure that life would be easier for them without him around.

One morning, Orunmila himself decided to get out of the town. He set out and went far into the forest. When he found a suitable spot for him to settle down, he built for himself a fairly comfortable place to live in. Every morning, he would say "Only if the house wherein Olofin lives in Ife were like this in which I live here would Ife be at peace. But if not, there can't be peace for them".

In course of time, the adverse effects started to show up in life; the seasons were affected, there was a drought. When it "rained at all, the rain came in hailstones, The frogs felt the thirst the kings's horses had nowhere to graze, people could n't build houses, women became barren. Yams in the farms did not grow. ~~corn~~ Chickens grew up but had no feathers.

"Why are things like this, for goodness sake?" they asked of one another. But they knew the answer themselves. It was because Orunmila was not with them. His having been sent out of the town is like turning a clay pot upside down so that no water can get into it. So they sent search teams out into the forest to look for Orunmila. With tears in their eyes they gave Orunmila the message from Olofin, asking him to return to Ife and help set things right again. Orunmila sent them back with a message to the Olofin laying down the conditions on which he dould return to help. The sacrifice would be two rats with freckled skin, two big fishes, two cocks with rich plumes, two heavy hens, two he-goats of wonderous sizes, two goats, two fat rams, two fatted sheep and 44,000 cowries (i.e. 2000 x 22). All these were produced and presented to Orunmila before he ever agreed to go back with them. Even then, no improvement was evident after Orunmila returned. So the people came to Orunmila again and pleaded with him to exercise his best knowledge for their well-being. Orunmila asked them for additional sacrifice, everything in two as before. After he had received this, then he perform some rituals. And prosperity returned.

36. (cf. 26)

Irete-Okanran was the oracle for Òrúnmila on the day when all the diviners assembled together in the house of Olófin and poisoned the wine they left for him. Orunmila was directed to fast for the day in order to escape being poisoned on that day. (Irete-Okanran).

When the medicine men assembled at the Olófin's, they took him into their confidence that they were to poison Orunmila. So they poisoned the palm-wine which would be left for him to drink, they also put poison on the cover cloth which they intended that he should use. They sent a false message of friendship to him and invited him to a party which they were having at the Olófin's. On his arrival at Olófin's house, he was offered the poisoned palm-wine. He looked at it, kept a steady gaze on it and asked:

> What is this that bubbles and foams in the keg?
> Ah, it is poison that foams and bubbles in the keg
> Irete-Okanran!
> No, we would n't drink of this today
> Thanks to Irete-Okanran.

After some time, they then offered him the other wine from bamboo-tree. Orunmila again looked it, and said as before.

Now Olofin brought out his Ifá instruments, spread them out and asked the assembled group to consult the oracle concerning his first-born son who lay ill. All the physicians had predicted that the child would not die. But on Orunmila being asked to give his own interpretation of the oracle concerning the child, he predicted that the child would die, unless Olofin's royal dress for ceremonial occasions as also the mat spread on the floor of the palace for the throne rest upon were surrendered for a sacrificial ritual for the child.

Olofin immediately thought he had another chance to carry out the poison plot mounted against Orunmila, so he asked that the cloth and the mat be poisoned and given to him. But as these things were being brought out, the bird (agó) which had served as Orunmila's promoter cried out and warned him not to sit on the royal mat nor let himself be touched by the regal clothes. Orunmila heeded the bird's instruction and directed that the assembled people should themselves sit on the mat and let themselves be covered with the cloth. All those who came in contact with the mat became infected by the poison. And Orunmila departed to his house in peace.

37 (cf. 26)

Irete-Okanran was the oracle for Orunmila in the day when all the diviners went to the Olofin's house and ate the pounded yam without any discretion. Orunmila was instructed to fast for one day so that he might not return ashamed from the Olofin's house on that day. Fasting again, today? The oracle explained, "Don't you know that it is those who have no sense of shame who eat the pounded-yam which belong to Obara-Ofu? (Irete-Okanran)

Olofin's first-born child died. The one whom the physicians assured him would not die. Olofin was very upset and angry. He decided immediately that he would use the occasion to punish all the physicians, including Orunmila. So he directed that no one in his household should show any sign of sorrow, and the death must be kept secret to anyone outside the household. He had the corpse disposed of, but at the burial, the head was severed from the corpse and kept.

On the day when Olofin had his next feast, he put the head of the child first in a big calabash and then had pounded-yam heaped on it. He sent and invited the physicians and diviners to the feast and placed this special bowl of pounded yam before them. Orunmila was not the first to arrive. Those who arrived before him had helped themselves from this bowl while Olofin sat and watched it all. He got his guards ready to take them all and throw them into the dungeon. However, Orunmila at last arrived and was invited to help himself from the bowl. He looked, and looked, and asked:

What is there in this bowl?
What is there looks like a top spinned by the world
What is there looks like bits of human flesh!
Irete-Okanran!
No, we don't eat of this
Irete-Okanran.

Olofin trembled. He asked Orunmila to prescribe the appropriate sacrifice. "This is a sacrifice to be thrown away (ebo arunu)" Orunmila answered. "A small goat, with 32,000 cowries (2000x16); that is the sacrifice to be thrown away. Than all these physicians who lack discretion should be brought to do obeisance before Orunmila".

...../

The material for the sacrifice was produced without any delay, and the physicians were handed over to Orunmila. Thus, he saved them from being killed. On their arrival at his house with him, they bowed down before him and pledged their service to him. Orunmila released them all and sent them back to their homes.

38.

Ọrọ f'ọrí s'ọrọ. This was the oracle for Orunmila when all the irunmale plotted against him, threatening that very early the following morning they would fall heavily upon his household. Orunmila was instructed to offer 200 eggs to be arranged right round his house so that the irúnmalẹ might not be able to prevail over him. Orunmila heard and obeyed; as a result, the irúnmalẹ had no power to do him harm. (Ìká-Gbè).

The physicians who had pledged obeisance and service to Orunmila quickly forgot that they owed their lives to him. They went and sought the aid of the Irúnmalẹ to co-operate with them against Orunmila. They all assembled one night and besieged Orunmila's house. They did not notice the eggs which Orunmila had arranged round his house. As it happened, during that night, these eggs developed roots which went into the ground and spread out, and the top of the eggs which remained above the ground became high mounds surrounding the house and shielding it from an attack from outside. When irúnmalẹ saw the mounds, they were surprised and became afraid. Orunmila then got himself well armed and came out against them. All the irúnmalẹ prostrated on their faces and begged him for mercy! They also said to him "Of a truth, you are the only one who can be described in terms of a mountain. Who on earth can move a mountain? Who pushes a mountain is only wasting his strength". From that day, Orunmila added this one to his praise-names: Can anyone push a mountain?"

39.

A person who has not yet possessed Ifá on earth has not yet got Ifá in heaven. This oracle was given to Orunmila when the whole earth took charges against him to heaven that his presence with them was such a hardship to them on earth. They also pleaded with Olọrun (God) that as things were going from bad to worse, he should replace Orunmila with another representative on earth, The oracle directed that Orunmila should offer one bundle of whips (cut from branches of the àtòri tree) as sacrifice. Orunmila heard and obeyed, then he went to answer the charges laid against him in heaven.

On the journey to heaven, Orunmila carried the load of whips on his head moaning as he went about the ingratitude of mankind (the men on earth). In his self-pity, he met Èsù who stopped to ask him where he was going? what the matter was, and why he was carrying a bundle of whips. Orunmila told him how the men on earth have gone to lay a complaint against him before Olọrun and how they had proposed to Olọrun that Orunmila be replaced on earth. Èsù was surprised because he believed that, compared with himself, Orunmila was very cool, patient and level-headed. He decided to accompany Orunmila to heaven, at least as an observer. The proceedings of the Orunmila case might teach him a lesson or two in readiness for the time when similar charges might be laid against him, as surely they would be. So Èsù took the load from Orunmila's head and both of them started to travel together.

On their arrival in heaven, Èsù saw ever so many elders from earth sitting waiting for Orunmila's arrival. He was amazed and filled with anger. He went in with the load of whips still on his head. He carried it up to the front of Olódùmarè. He put it down there. He took a few whips from the bundle, walked back to the assembled elders of the earth and started straightaway to whip them.

.../23

All the inhabitants of the earth sitting in heaven started to shout, calling on Olodumare to deliver them. "He has even followed us up here to beat us", they added.

Olodumare sent some of his servants to go and find out what the matter was. After some time, they managed to stop and the whole matter went before Olodumare.

Olodumare said to Orunmila "So this is how you've been treating them on earth? Is this what you call caring?" In defence Orunmila explained that it was not he but Esu who was responsible as the Olodumare could very well see what was happening at that time in heaven. By that time, Esu was still jumping, shouting at the top of his voice, accusing and sharply rebuking those elders from the earth. He said to them "Why? If you said Orunmila was hard with you on earth, did you think he would not be able to do it in heaven"?

From that day it was said, "Whoever is able to shave (fa) another s head on earth and is able to do it also in heaven surely deserved to be called Ifa".

Also from the day on, Olodumare ruled that Orunmila should never again bring Esu along with him to heaven, and that he must exercise direct supervision himself on earth. And Olodumare then asked the inhabitants of the earth to go back with Orunmila and to cooperate with him.

40 (cf. 35)

Honour-surrounds-me is the oracle (secret code for Ore (Cyperus Heticulatus), Ere is the oracle for the swampy ground....

They were the diviners for Orunmila when he became so old that it became necessary to let it become known in heaven that Orunmila was already in his dotage and was no longer of much use in his appointed task on earth. He was asked to perform a ritual with 200 palm-fronds, 200 round cakes of chalk. The ritual was to secure that old age might become a common feature all over the earth. Orunmila heard and obeyed. And so it was that old age became a common feature.

When Olodumare heard the report about Orunmila's old age, he sent a messenger to Orunmila saying If it was true that Orunmila was as old as it had been reported, he would advice that it was time Orunmila should come back to heaven. However, before Olodumare's message reached Orunmila, the latter had performed the ritual as he was directed. He squashed the chalk into powder. He broke the palm-fronds into smaller pieces and dipped them into the chalk. With the palm-fronds he had the doors and walls of his house sprinkled with the chalk. It was so much that those who were going and coming into the house were sprayed with chalk.

The messengers from Olodumare came and delivered the message to Orunmila. He Orunmila would like the towns people, both young and old, to hear the message directly from the messengers, he kept the messengers while he sent for the town-people. There was a big turn-out. Then the message was delivered. One of the children of Orunmila jumped out and asked "What? that he should return to heaven? Why? Look at yourselves, Can't you see how you yourselves look?" It was then that the messengers became aware that both they and all the people were hoary in appearance, just like Orunmila himself. They were surprised. So the messengers returned to heaven to report back to Olodumare that they could not bring Orunmila back because the people themselves looked like him.

.....

41.

Òkànràn-méji was the oracle for Qrunmila, and it was the same also for all the Irúnmalẹ on the day that they started on their way to the earth. There was a dispute among them as to who of them should exercise seniority and leadership once they arrived on the earth. The oracle warned them they had better perform a ritual first to ensure that they ever arrived there at all. A small goat, a net and 2000 white cowries would constitute the ritual materials. But it was Qrunmila alone who performed the ritual. The other Irúnmalẹ disobeyed (Òkànràn-méji).

The mistake which the Irúnmalẹ made was in assuming that seniority would be established ultimately by the order of arrival on earth. That was why they were early to be on the way rather than wait to perform the ritual before setting off from heaven. But they did not relise that there was a gracious leopard on the way which intercepted them as they came along the way and killed them all one by one.

As for Qrunmila, he waited patiently in heaven until he completed the rituals, then he started off. As he approached the spot where the leopard was, a thick cloud appeared and it started to rain. The raining was so heavy that the leopard went off the road for shelter, and before it came back to the road, Qrunmila had passed. When the leopard returned to the road, however, it sniffed the air and knew that someone had passed. So it started off in pursuit towards the earth. The leopard overtook Qrunmila only after the latter had arrived on the earth but before he was able to go into a dwelling place. The animal jumped at Qrunmila to devour him, but Qrunmila was quick in defence, he threw the net over it and then overpowered it, tied it up and carried it in captivity into his house.

So it was that the first person to see Qrunmila on earth saw him with a live leopard, and when he was out in a lodging place it was with a live leopard in his company. His lodging place quickly became identified as the place where the leopard lives. Everyone feared to treat it with presumption, for it was the leopard's house. In course of time, Qrunmila was himself nicknamed "The Leopard", and another phrase was added to his praise names: 'The brazen-eyed one, scratched, but not destroyed".

It was because as Qrunmila carried the leopard along, the latter pushed its nails through the net and scratched Qrunmila's head. The marks can still be seen today on the palm-kernels used for divination.

And on the first occasion when Qrunmila was to perform a ritual on behalf of his head after his arrival on the earth, it was that leopard he killed for that ritual.

42.

He bends down from his house to the farm,
When he reaches the farm he never bends down,
He keeps erect from the farm back to his house.

These three were at one time apprentice-diviners under Qrunmila. When Qrunmila was going on a journey, he warned them not to use the planchette in his absence lest Olofin should invite them to consult the oracle for him.

No sooner had Qrunmila left than these three started to plot him. They misinterpreted his motives: He hated to see them make money or at least to be able to maintain themselves. He hated to see them get into good favour with Olofin.

...../

He hated to see them get popular and known in the community as competent diviners. He wanted ther to remain apprentices for ever and treated perpetually as small boys. Many such other interpretations they put on Qrunmila's injuction to them. So they rebelled. They got out the planchette and started to consult the oracle for enquirers. Their services were well patronized. More and more people got to know that even in the absence of Qrunmila, some apprentices of his could serve the needs. Olófin got to know this, and he s nt a message to them inviting them to visit him at dawn on the following day. These apprentices were very happy believing that the path to fame was prosperity had at last opened up before them.

They went to Olófin as requested and consulted the oracle for him. The oracular sign was Iká-Fú, an oracle of death. They were frightened to interpret it; yet they put on a bold appearance and declared that as a sacrifice against the impending death of Olófin, he needed to produce a live leopard to be slaughtered over the Ifá sign which had been traced on the planchette. On hearing this, Olófin became perturbed. He asked them to remain with the Ifá behind a locked door while he gave instruction to the male population of the town to go into the bush and look for a live leopard which he could use to remove the danger of death. An exclamation of surprise and disbelief echoed through the town. What new plot could this be?

Was the Olófin putting up a device to have the male population of the town killed off? How on earth could they seize a leopard alive? But since they knew that it was an oracular direction, some protested that Olófin could not be taken as the one at fault. It was the diviner or diviners who must be responsible. So they started to curse whoever the diviners might be.

However, Olófin insisted that they should all go out in search of a live leopard. They actually saw one, cornered it, kept it at bay so that it could not escape. But yet it was not easy to catch it alive. Quite a number of the hunters were torn into pieces by the leopard as they moved forward in turn to catch it. It was a difficult and perilous task.

As this was going on, Qrunmila returned to the town, heard the full story from Olófin who begged Qrunmila to intervene with his superior wisdom. Qrunmila consulted his oracle as to what he could do. He was directed to offer a dog, a billy-goat, and a net, together with 160 cowries (200 x 3). Qrunmila heard and obeyed. After the ritual, he departed and went into the forest to look for a leopard. As soon as he saw one, he threw the net over it, wrapped it up in the net and carried it home. Olófin was happy with amazement. To him, Qrunmila was wholly incomparable among men. He ordered that a goat and 22,00 cowries be given to Qrunmila.

When Qrunmila returned to his house, he was met by his household and crowds of admirers' dancing and singing:

My Lord becomes a leopard: Meat is what a leopard eats
Qrunmila becomes a leopard
Meat is . . . . . .
Who would n't fear a leopard?
Meat is . . . .

Ifá is unique
Ifá is daring
Eat with those on the right
Eat with those of the left
Bring your meat here,
The arms and legs are eaten
Anetebi has roasted it
Here, there and everywhere .....

APPENDIX III. YORUBA VERSIONS OF ÒRÚNMÌLÀ'S PRAISE-NAMES

The Yoruba versions of Òrúnmìlà's praise-names as used in this thesis is as follows, compared with its variants :-

A. Oriki Òrúnmìla (The Yoruba text of Lijadu's version)

Òrúnmìla, Eléèrí Ipin, Ibìkeji Olódùmarè.
A-jé-ju-òògùn, Òbìrìkìti, A-pa-ojó-iku-dà.
Olúwa mi, Àmòìmòtán, a kò mò ó tán, kò se,
À bá mò ó tán, iba se kè.
Olúwa mi, Olówá àìyèrè; Omo elésin Ilé-Òyin.
Omo olóòpá kan t'ó ṣ'àrán dòdi-dòdi.
Olúwa mi, Òpòkí, A-mú-idẹ-ṣ'oju.
Èékan kò jé k'ékùn ho'ra, Àsàkà-sáka àkún.
Omo Òsówùnmí Tapà ti iwèwù nini;
Omo Oso pa 'dẹ m'ówó ma 'dẹ m'ésè, ó nbéère atèpá òje.
Olúwa mi, Ìgbò, Omo iyánbìríkìtí inú odó,
Omo igbá tí is'òpe jìàjìà.
Iku dúdú àtewo, Òrò, A-j'epo máa pón;
Agìrí ilé Ilogbón, A-b'ólóówú díwére máa ran.
Olúwa mi, A-tó-bá-j'aiyé, Òrò, A-b'íkú-j'ìgbò.
Olúwa mi, Àjiki, Ògège, A-gb'aiyé-gún :
Òdùdù tí idu orí emerè, O tún orí tí kò sunwòn se.
Omo A-l'éjò tí nrìn mirin-mirin l'órí ewé;
Omo A-rìn tí nrin Òde-Òwò sàkàsàkà.

B. Oríkì Ifá (as quoted by James Johnson, p.21)

Òrúnmìla - Heaven is the wise and successful arbiter or reconciler; or Heaven knows him who will be saved or how to save.

Olódùmarè - Olódù, Omọ erè (Olódù, the son of Erè)

Ikúforíji - The Being whom death honours and pays obeisance to.

Olíjeèní - The Master of the seventh day festival.

Oba Olófà A-sùn-l'ólá - The ruler who draws blessings and prosperity after him, and who sleeps in the midst of honours.

Nini tí ise Omọ Olóni - The Possessor, who is the son of the greater possessor.

Eérintúndé - Laughing comes back to the world; or The Being whose advent into the world has brought back the laughter of joy and gladness.

Owá - The Being whose advent into the world from heaven filled men with joyful and thankful surprise which caused many to ask, "Is it Thou who has come?", Iwo li o wa? The Being from heaven whose constant cry to all the world is that they should come to Him.

Owá, Alàárún j'árún - The parent who has given birth to five children and has lost none of them by death.

Olúbèsan(Olú-lí-ibi-èsan) - The Chief Avenger of wrongs.

Édú - The Black One,or The Great One whom, as tradition says, troubles have made black.

Òpè-Ifá - The palm sacred to Ifa.

Alájíki, tí kì íforíbalè f'enìkan - The Being whom all honour with daily morning salutation, but who is above paying respect to any other being.

Abákúwíjó - The Being whose power is so great that He calls death to account.

Babá ye omo - The Father who reflects honour on His children, or of whom His children may justly be proud.

Òkitibiri,A-ba-ojó-iku-da - The Being who turning Himself over as it were in a struggle, postpones for His client the day of death.

C. Awon Oriki Òrúnmìlà (as quoted by A.O.Osiga,para 143 of his Ipadabo).

1. Òrúnmìlà, Abarapetu, Agbonnirégún
2. Alájogun, Àjànà Òtà
3. Elóòri Ìpín, Olójó, Aládé
4. Olówa àiyèrè, Omo Elésin Ilé Òyin
5. Omo elépe kan t'ó nse àràn dò,idògi
6. Iku dúdú àtewo; Òrò, A-j'epo máà pón
7. Omo Iyún birikiti inú igbó
8. Agírí Ilé Ìlógbón; A-b'olóòwú díwere máà ran
9. A-dú-máa-dán; A-tún ori eni tí o sunwon se
10. Omo A-rín tí i rin Òde Owo sàkàsàka.

The following point is noteworthy in two of the versions quoted above. OLÓDÙMARÈ, according to James Johnson, is part of the praise-names of Ifá or Òrúnmìlà. However, in the version quoted by E.M.Lijadu, Òrúnmìlà is described as IBÌKEJÌ OLÓDÙMARÈ. The question arises, which of the two is correct? Also, ifLijadu's version is to be accepted, in what sense is Òrúnmìlà to be understood as 'second to Olódùmarè' or 'Olódùmarè's double'?

GLOSSARY OF YORUBA WORDS USED

Àádùn - ground maize mixed with oil, lit. that which is sweet. 270

Abíkú - Children who die in infancy, believed to have the habit of returning into the mother's womb to be born again; the spirits of such children form a guild or "companies" the unborn members of which may persuade those already born to return unduly into the spirit "world". It is observed that the incidence of Abíkú and beliefs associated with the same has greatly reduced with improved nutrition, hygiene and medical facilities. 172

Àb'-iku - j'igbo - he wo locked horns with death. 194

Abinúku Ọba - wives or servants of Oyo Kings who die on the grave of a dead King, 268

Abíọna - the name of a child born on a road. 272

Aburo - a younger person. 69

À dá fún - lit. it is divined for .... Also À dìá fún ... or À d'Ifá fún. 101, 102.

Adáhùnsẹ - a medical practitioner who depends on his memory rather than divination for the identification of the appropriate herbs. 104, 233

Adọkun - an anaestor-cult at Igan-okoto, Egbado, 73,

Adulawo - one who has a black skin, 137, 141

Adura - prayer, 251ff, 261

Afọsẹ - an incantation the very reciting of which automatically effects the intention. 259

Agẹmọ - a secret cult generally performed by the Ijebu. 27, 73

Agunmu - herbs and roots pounded together and dried to be used as medicine in a hot drink, 238-9

Agbonniregun - a praise - name of Ọrúnmila 283

Àilẹrà - lit. the state of the body being unwell. 236

Àisàn - illness, the state of not feeling well, disease. 236-7

Àiyé - the world, the wicked world. 243f.

Àjẹ - a witch, witchcraft, 237, 245

Àjíndè (Àjíndẹ̀) - lit. waking up and being able to get up, resurrection, 253

Àlá - dreams, 223-225, 282

Àláàdúrà (Àládúrà) - the one who has the praying habit. 17, 143, 145, 149, 150, 154, 158-162, 166, 168, 172, 214, 236, 249, 256, 260, 278, 298, 300, 309-311,

Alaafin - the king of Ọyọ, lit. the one who owns a palace. 65ff. 70, 97,

Alafia (alàafia) - well-being, peace, 237-8

Alapako - one who has or deals in planks of wood. 151

Alásegun - a maker of medicines, medical practitioner, variant of ọnísègùn, q.v. 232

Alọ - riddles 94

Amọmọtan (Amọọmọtan.) - Incomprehensible, He who cannot be or is not fully known, 188.

Ara lile - the state of the body being well. 236

.../2

Àrun - that which destroys, a virulent disease. 236-7, 242,

Àsà - custom, tradition. 7, 8, 296

Àsà tiwa - our custom. 8

Àse - an incantation which carries with it authority, fiat. 251ff., 259ff. 292

Àtèsèjàiyé - the ceremony for divining the future of a newborn child, 271f.

Awúre - incantation for wishing oneself well. 233, 251f, 281,

Ayájo - lit. The corresponding date, e.g. birthday. 105, 252,

Àyàn - the cult of drumming and of drummers 275

Bàbálawo - man (father) of knowledge, an Ifa priest. 75, 79, 81-84,121, 122, 175f., 182, 186f., 222, 233f., 243ff., 270, 281,

Bálógun - a chieftaincy for the commander of the army 277

Bálúfon - a cult of new clothes among the Ijebu-Remo, especially in the Shagamu area, 247

Èdùmàrè - a shortened form of Ólódùmarè, q.v. 257, 258

Èégún (égúngún) - a masquarade sometimes supposed to be an ancestor incarnate. 27, 79, 276

Ègbé - a type of "medicine" believed to be able to transport its user physically away from a scene of danger. 292

Ègbòògí - lit. the root of trees, roughly interpreted as "medicine". 229, 230

Èmèrè - ghosts of dead children, 196

Ènìà (Èniyàn) - a person, people. 58

Èpè - a curse, lit. an act of calling, 259

Epo - oil, 240

Èsù (Eshu) - the divinity of ambiguity and resourcefulness, usually wrongly translated the devil, of Élégbara. 27, 184, 187, 218, 248, 285-287

Ètùtù - specific type of ritual for peace and calm, 105, 249, 264-270, 281,

Ewe alasiwalu - the herbs for reintegrating personality. 235

Ewé Àsùnrùn - the leaf of a climber plant used as a laxative or as a cure for dysentary. Cassia alata. 234

Ewe Ifa - herbs secretly prescribed by Ifa geomancy. 234

Ewi - a masquarade's song. 94, 276

Ewo (Eewo) - taboo; like the Hebrew word cherem, the root of the word is related to that which is to be treated with due caution or respect. 296,

Ebo - a ritual, usually wrongly translated specifically as 'sacrifice'. 105, 107, 264-270, 281

Efe - a satire in song. 94, 276

Egbé - company, spiritual doubles and mates, 270

Egbe Omo Oduduwa - an Association of the children of Oduduwa q.v. 60,

.../3

Ẹgbọ́n - an older person, senior. 69

Ẹlẹ́gbárá - another name for Ẹ̀sù. q.v. 187, 240,

Ẹlẹ́rí Ìpín - the witness at the choice of one's destiny. 182-3 (Ẹlẹ́ẹ̀rí, Ẹlẹ́rìí)

Ẹlukú - A secret cult among the Ijẹ̀bú Yorùbá, 10,

Ẹnu-ọ̀wá - the gate to the palace. 191

Ẹ̀tù - something burnt to powder, gun powder, 239

Ẹ̀wà - beans, 240

Gẹ̀lẹ́dẹ́ - a mask cult in which the masks are mainly of wood. 94, 276

Gbẹ̀tugbẹ̀tu - a herbal preparation used in connection with Àsẹ̀ or Afọ̀sẹ̀ q.v. 259

Gbọ̄gbọ̀ùnsẹ̄ - a medicine believed to be able to cure various diseases. 234

Ìdáwó (Ìdáàwó) - the ceremony connected with the cutting of the unbilical cord 271, 273

Ifá - a Yoruba religious system associated with the mythical figure Ọ̀rúnmìlà and associated with divination and ritual, 17, 27, 55, 63, 74-87, 91-108, 120-123, 170, 281, 285, 294, 299, 300, 304, 309, 310, 314,

Ifá Àsẹ̀sẹ̀ - primal rites in the Ifá system. 91

Ifá Àwúre - incantational myths and rites in the Ifa system, 91

Ifá Ẹ̀bọ - ritual Ifá myths, 91

Ifá Ìṣẹ̀gùn - medical Ifá myths, 91

Ifá Ìwọ́sẹ̀ - divinatory Ifá myths and rites, 91

Ifá Ọ̀logbọ́n - philosophic Ifá myths, 91

Ifọ̀kànbálẹ̀ - peace of mind, 282

Igbá - calabash, 182

Igbádùn - enjoyment, the joy of good health, 237

Igbákejì - lit. second calabash, next in rank. 182

Igbẹ́kẹ̀lẹ́ - trust, 282

Ìjálá - hunter's song, 94, 276

Ìjàmọ̀ Ọ̄gún-ẹ̀gbá - an ancestor cult among the Ikale. 124

Ìjọ̀ - a congregation, church. 75

Ìjọ̀ Ọ̀rúnmìlà Àdúláwọ̀ - the church of the black-skinned associated with the divinity Ọ̀rúnmìlà. 75, 130, 137, 141, 222, 288,

Ìkọ́mọ̀jáde - lit. a ceremony for bringing a newly born babe outside the house, which also marks the mother's release from confinement, 272

Ilàri - palace slaves of Ọ̀yọ́, 66, 67.

Ilẹ́ - the earth, the ground, 291

Inú funfun - whiteness of the inside, purity of heart, 226,

Ìpàrùndẹ̀ (Ìsẹ̀rùndẹ̀) - the ritual for disposing of the implements and 'medicinal' crafts of a member of the guild of hunters, 274

Ìrẹ̀ (Òkè Ọ̀rí) - the forest hideout which Ọ̀gún used as a foundry. 68, 71

../4

Irunmale (Imale) - divinities, 'four hundred divinities' according to popular etymology. 183, 195, 208

Ise Isin - the work of serving. 21,

Isin - serving, service, worship, religion. 20f, 37f., 47, 108, 117, 145, 155, 167, 214, 222, 299

Isin ile wa - the traditional religion of our land. 20

Isomoloruko - a naming ceremony. 272

Itan - a story, history, 94

Iwa - a be-ing, character. 283-298

Iwa l'oba awure - morality or character is supreme over incantation. 107

Iwe - a book. 223-225, 282.

Iwosan - a cure, looking after or caring for the sick, 249,

Jakuta - a divinity who fights by hureing stones, sometimes confused with Sango 65,66

Koso - the name of the place where Sango hanged himself; lit. he did not hand himself 66

Madarikan (Maadarikan) - a kind of 'medicine' which prevents one from being reached by harm 232

Obitun - Ondo dialect for bride, an annual ritual for girls expecting to be married within a year, 294

Odu - myth, a corpus of myths 74f, 83, 86, 91, 121 222, 281, 283, 314

Odudua - ancestor hero believed to be the progenitor of the Yoruba people 41, 42, 56, 58ff., 62ff., 67f., 74, 80, 87

Odu-Ifa - a corpus of Ifa myths 83, 92ff., 121, 176, 179, 185

Ogboni - a secret cult of the elders, with a pronounced ritual of the earth, 9f, 79, 128, 204,

Ogun - the divinity of hunting, warfare, and iron 27, 55, 68f., 73, 80, 82, 274, 283, 285, 314

Olodumare - a Yoruba name for God Almighty; absolute qualities, 28, 34, 35, 50, 53, 59, 60, 62, 73, 84, 85, 175, 178, 181-189, 259f., 284, 287, 290f.,

Olokun - the divinity of the sea, 97, 258

Ologun - one who has 'medicine', 232

Olukumi - lit. my friend 58

Oluwa mi - my Lord, 187

Oluwo - chief among the babalawo (q.v.) a senior titleholder in the Ogboni cult, 294

Omi Iye - the water of life, 236

Onifa - one who has the Ifa or is initiated into the Ifa cult 204

Onigbagbo - one who has faith, a believer, a Christian, 260, 280

Onisegun - medical practitioner (cf. Alasegun) 232

Oogun - 'medicine' 228-232, 249, 251, 269

Òògun àìkú - the "medicine" for lengthening the life of the user, 230

Òògùn àjílẹ̀ - fertilizer 230

Orí - head, 196,

Orí àìsàn - a bad head, 196, 197,

Orí bíbọ̀ - ritual performance for the sake of a person's head, 266

Orí wíwẹ̀ - ritual washing of a head, 266

Òrìṣà (Orisha) - mythical divinities 34, 35, 47, 52, 59, 74f. 80f, 86, 286,

Òrìṣà Òkò - the divinity of agriculture 78,

Òrò - a bull-roarer; a custom or ritual process which must be done with the knowledge or fear that failure to do it would bring dire consequences, 7f., 14, 20, 27, 37, 79, 108, 117, 145, 155, 167, 214, 199,

Òṣó - a wizard, 249

Ọ̀bà - a king, 97-98, 114, 232, 278,

Ọ̀bàlúàìyé - another name for the divinity of small pox, 80, 291,

Ọ̀bàtálá - the Yoruba creator divinity or agent of creation 27, 29, 55, 59, 62f., 80, 259,

Ọ̀fọ̀ - incantation, lit. the spoken word, 251f, 253f, 261

Ọ̀jọ́ Àwọ̀ - the day of the mysteries, 78,

Ọ̀lọ́run - God, lit. Owner of heaven, 27, 35, 37, 78, 181f., 287, 291

Ọ̀lọ́ṣà - the divinity of the lagoon, 258

Ọ̀lọ́wá - he who has a palace, 191f.

Ọ̀mọ̀límọ̀rọ̀gbọ̀ - an Ìfẹ̀ mythical figure who gave himself for man and later went to heaven on a rope 196

Ọpẹ̀lẹ̀ (Awpele) - an oracular system inferior to Ifa 78f.

Ọ̀ránmíyàn - one of the sons of Ọ̀dùduwà 62,

Ọ̀rúnmìlà - name of the divinity with which the Ifá cult is associated; lit. Heaven-knows-saving, 59, 63f, 74, 85, 87, 121-125, 170, 174-211, 283-288, 294, 299, 317.

Òṣùn - Yorùbá divinity associated with the river of that name, much venerated in Òṣógbọ̀ town, 27, 73, 82,

Ọ̀wá - a palace 191f., title of a King

Ọ̀yá - Yorùbá divinity associated with the River Niger, 27, 65, 69,

Peregun - the leaves of dracaena fragrans 234

Rárà - a style of sung eulogy, 256

Sùúrù (Súrù) - patience, 282

Ṣàngó - Yoruba divinity associated with thunder, also claimed to have been a King of Ọ̀yọ́, 27, 29, 55, 64f, 67ff, 77, 82, 285, 314,

Ṣ'ẹ̀bọ̀ k'òògùn lè jẹ́ - make a ritual to make the medicine efficacious 107, 265

Ṣọ̀npọ̀nná - the small-pox divinity, 29

Ṣóun - king of Ògbómọ̀ṣọ́ 97

Tìmì - an Ọba (king) of Ẹdẹ town, 71f.

Wásimi (Wâásimi) (Wasinmi) - lit. 'come and rest', a colony of refuge,277

Wòlíì - a prophet or seer,222.

Yẹmọ̀njá (Yemája) - a mythical divinity believed to be the mother of all other divinities,70,80,82,86,218.

P.S. Individual names of persons and of tribes and places are not included in the glossary above. Nor are the words used in the quoted Odù-Ifá or other religious hymns included.

xxxooo000xxxooo000xxxooo000xxxooo000xxxooo000xxxooo000xxxooo000

V. NOTES ON YORUBA ORTHOGRAPHY.

1. The mid-tone. In the text,(pp.1-317),the tone on every syllable is marked,"including the mid-tone", according to Convention iii and the reccommendation thereon : Report of the Yoruba Orthography Committee, Ministry of Education, Ibadan,1969,page 6; also pp. 2-3.

2. Double Vowels and relevant Tone marks. The use of the tilde in the old orthography is now generally discontinued. In its place, double vowels are used with the appropriate tone marks,acute or grave. (Report,page 5,section 11; also R.C. Abraham, Dictionary,pp.xiff. It is necessary to call attention here to two issues in this regard:

a) Is Àladura to be written as Àláàdúrà or as Àládùúrà? Many people write it as Àladura without any tone marks. However, as spoken, the lengthening seems to fall on the u. But since the prefix alá- is formed from the first vowel of àdúrà with the grave tone, it seems natural to double the a-. This is the form used by R.C. Abraham in his famous Dictionary. Alternatively, the single vowel may be marked with a double accent, thus Àlâdúrà.

b) However, the tilde in the old orthography answered not only for tones but also for elision (the compression or suppression of particular vowels or diphthongs). Àmọ̀mọ̀tán or Àmọ̀ìmọ̀tán is from Àmọ̀-àìmọ̀-tán (to know but not to know fully). Should this word be written as Àmọ̀ọmọ̀tán, the negative particle become lost and a wrong root-word is suggested -ọmọ̀tán. Similarly, ìdawọ́ comes from ìda- and ìwọ́. The vowel before the second word is elided. If we write ìdaawọ́, the original root-word, ìwọ́, is made to become àwọ́. Ìdaìwọ́ is patently better. But this is what was previously abbreviated in speech to idawọ. A similar problem is found with Egbọ̀gi which comes from Egbọ̀-igi(the roots of trees). To write Egbọ̀ọgi (the roots of ọgi) misleads Another example is màdárìkàn when written as mààdárìkàn (mà-àdá-rì-kàn). Once again, the double accent seems to be a better device, even in spite of the printer's need for new accents!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. The Yoruba People.

Abimbola, Wande. Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa, Apa kini, Apa keji, Yoruba Classics II & IV. WM. Collins & Co. Ltd., Glasgow, 1968, 1969.

- - "The Literature of the Ifa Cult", S.O. Biobaku (ed), 1973.

Abraham, R. C., Dictionary of Modern Yoruba, University of London Press, 1958.

Adebayo, A.C. Standard Yoruba Course, Ibadan, 1965.

Adedeji, J.A. "The Origin of the Yoruba Masque Theatre: The Use of Ifa Diviniation Corpus as Historical Evidence", African Notes, Bulletin of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, 6:1, 1970.

Aimiuwa, O.E.I. "Oduduwa", Nigeria Magazine. Nos. 107-109, December 1970-August, 1971, pp. 85-90.

Ajayi, J.F. Ade & Smith, Robert S. Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century, Cambridge University Press, 1964.

Ajayi, J.F.A. Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891. London, 1965.

Ajibola, J.A. Chief, Owe Yoruba, O.U.P., Ibadan. 1968.

Ajisafe, A.K. History of Abeokuta, Richard Clay & Sons Ltd., Suffolk, 1924.

Akinjogbin, I.A. Dahomey an its Neighbours. 1708-1818. Cambridge University Press, 1969.

Awolalu. J.O. "Sacrifice in the Religion of the Yoruba", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1970.

Bascom, W. "The Sociological role of the Yoruba Cult-group" Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association. LXIII, 1944, pp.75

- - Ifa Diviniation: Communication Between Gods and men in West Africa, Indiana University Press, 1969b.

- - "The Yoruba in Cuba". Nigeria Magazine. No. 37, 1952, pp. 14-20.

Beier, Ulli. A Year of Sacred Festivals in One Yoruba Town, Lagos, 1959.

- - "Obatala: Five Myths of the Yoruba Creator God", Black Orpheus, No. 7, June 1960, Ibadan, p. 35.

- - The Imprisonment of Obatala and other plays, Heinemann, 1966.

- - Return of the Gods: New Sacred Art of Susanne Wenger, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Biobaku, S.O. The Origin of the Yoruba, University of Lagos, 1971.

- - Sources of Yoruba History, O.U.P. 1973.

Campbell, Robert, A Pilgrimage to my Motherland: An "Account of a Journey among the Ergbas and Yorubas of Central Africa in 1859-60. Thomas Hamilton, New York, 1861.

Carroll, Kelvin, Yoruba Religious Carving, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1967.

Clark, J.P. "The Imprisonment of Obatala", a poem published in Black Orpheus, Ibadan No. 10, p. 5.

Coker, G.B.A., Family Property Among the Yoruba, Swere and Maxwell, London 1956 .

Crowther. Samuel, A Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language, Seeleys, London, 1852.

Coutlander, Harold. Tales of Yoruba Gods and Heroes, Crown Publishers, Inc., New York, 1973.

Daramola ati Jeje, Awon Asa ati Orisa Ile Yoruba, Onibonoje Press, Ibadan 1967.

Davidson, Basil. A History of West Africa 1000-1800, Longman, 1967.

Duckworth, W.H. "A Visit to the Apostles and the Town of Aiyetoro", Nigerian Magazine, XXXVI, 1951, p. 387.

Ellis, A.B. The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave-Coast of West Africa, Chapman and Hall, London, 1894.

D.O. Epega (Snr) (1881-1956) obit 19/6/56.
- - The Mystery of Yoruba Gods (parts I (1932) and II 1956)
- - Ifa, Amona Awon Baba wa, Ode-Remo (Script)
- - Akunlegba Tabi Kadara, June 1950
- - Ire Eniyan (advertised in 1932)
- - Af'Igbagbo b'Olorun rin 1932
- - Ihamora Oluwa 1932
- - Soni-bare 1932
- - Imole Awon ti nwa Oluwa 1932

D.O. Epega (Jnr) - Obi, June 1965

Esan, Olanipekun, "The Delphic and Ifa Oracles", Nigeria and the Classics, Proceedings of the 2nd Conference on Classics, Ibadan, 1958.

Fadipe, N.A. The Sociology of the Yoruba, Ibadan University Press, 1970.

Fagbenro-Beyioku, Akin, H. Antus Williams - "A Comparative Study of the Yoruba Religion with special reference to Ifaism and Christianity" Article published in Vo. I. No. 1 of The Nigerian Daily Telegraph, 12th November 1927, republished in the same paper in 1930.

Fagg, William. The Art of Western Africa, Fontana Unesco Art Books 1967.

Farrow, S.S., Faith, Fancies and Fetish, SPCK, 1926.

Frobenius, Leo. The Voice of Africa, Vol. 1, Hutchinson, London, 1913.

Gleason, Judith. Orisha, the Gods of Yorubaland; New York, 1971.
- - A recitation of Ifa, Oracle of the Yoruba, Grossman Publishers, New York, 1963.

Idowu, E.B. Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief, Longmans, Green & Co., London 1962.

Ijimere, Obotunde, The Imprisonment of Obatala, and other Plays, Heinemann, 1966.

Dr. Adedeji Ishola. Our Doctrines and Objects, with two Appendices re Ex-Supt. O.S. Olukoya Onabanjo of Lagos. Isholarim Congregation Ijebu-Ode, Lagos 1926

Johnson, Samuel The History of the Yorubas, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1920.

Kenyo, E. Alademoni, Origin of the Progenitor of the Yoruba Race, Lagos, 1950.

Koolle, W.W. Polyglotta Africana, Church Mission House, London, 1852.

Lander, R.L.J. Journals of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger, Vo. 1, London 1832.

Lijadu, E.M. - - Iwe Irohin ati Ile Isura Eko ti Egbe Awon Olufe
- - Ile-Ibi won li Abeokuta, Lagos 1884-5.
- - The Effects of Foreign Literature and Science Upon the Natives of the Yoruba country. (Printed for the Abeokuta Patriotic Society). Lagos 1887.
- - Ifa: Imole Re ti ise Ipile Isin ni Ile Yoruba. R.T.S. July 28, 1897, Exeter, James Townsend & Sons, 1901, 1908, 1914, 1923.
- - Awon Arafo-Orin Ti Sobo Arobiodu 1902

- - Iwe Keji Arofo-Orin Ti Arohiodu 1907

- - Orunmila, James Townsend, 1908.

- - Iwe Irohin ti Ise Odun Meje Ekini ti Egbe Ajihinrere l'ofe Ondo, 1901-1903.

- - Lijadu Papers: (Unpublished Journals and Letters) 1900-1926 (U.I. Library and National Archives, Ibadan.)

- - Unpublished Manuscripts on Ifa =
i Odu Ifa (16 x 16 x 16)
ii Ewe Ajasa (Medical side of Ifa)
iii Iwe Omoran (Awo ati Agbara Awon Aje)

- - Manuscripts in preparation by Rev. E. Adekunle Lijadu:
a. Obi Atata, Efodu Onigbagbo (Obi Divination)
b. Ifa Catechism
c. Ifa and the Bible
d. Obaluaiye (Itan, Bibo, Wiwe, ati iwadi lowo Orisa Sonponna)

Lloyd, P.C. Africa in Social Change, Penguin, London, 1967.

Lucas, J.O. The Religion of the Yorubas, Lagos 1948.

Maclean, Una, Magical Medicine: A Nigerian Case-Study, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, London, 1971.

Makinde, M.A. Ile-Ife: An Introduction, Ibadan, December 1970

Meek, C.K. Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe, O.U.P. 1937.

Morgan, Kemi. The Myth of Yoruba Ancestry, Ibadan. n.d.

Morton-Williams. Peter. 'The Yoruba Ogboni Cult in Oyo", Africa XXX/4, 1960.

- - "The Mode of Divination". Africa 1966.

Oduyoye, Modupe, The Vocabulary of Yoruba Religious Discourse, Day star Press, Ibadan, 1972.

Odunjo, J.F. Eko Ijinle Yoruba Alawiye, Apa Keji Longmans of Nigeria, 1969.

Ogilby, John. Africa, being an Accurate Description... London 1970.

T.A.J. Ogunbiyi: Iwe Itan Ifa, Agbigba, Yanrin Tite, ati Owo Erindilogun, Lagos, Ifa-Olu Printing Works,? 1952

- - Adura Tete Da mi Lohun

- - Banuso

- - Awon Adura Ojojumo Ati ti Ofo Ojojumo, (Banuso ati Teteda milohun 8th impression, 1968, 36 pp.

Ojo, G.T. Yoruba Culture, University of London Press, London, 1966.

S. Adeniran Oke. Ele: Lagos, May 1919.
- - European and Native Marriages, 1919.
- - Oro Na (The Word) n.d. (S.A.O.)
- - Isin melo ni Mbe?(S.A.) .) (How many Religions there are?) Ilare Press, Ibadan 1924.
- - The African Religion, neither Christianity nor Mohammedanism, but "The Kingdom of God" Ibadan 1927.
- - Isina Kiriyo, Pataki Asaro fun Enia Dudu gbogbo ni Ile Yoruba (The Missing of the Way by the Creoles, An Important Meditation piece for the Black People throughout Yorubaland) August 1927, (Adeniran, Ojise Idayo Enia Dudu).
- - Asewo (A poster, using the then new word for prositutes to describe the Black Man worshiping in a European way). 1928.
- - Iwe Orin (A hymnbook, title-page lost, of 45 Song-poems published in July 1920).
- - To every Lover of the African Race, Greeting (A Poster asserting persecution by the government and some Church Agents. Ibadan. 1st March, 1932.

Okubote, Moses Botu, Iwe Kukuru ti Itan Ijebu, Lisabi Press, Ibadan. n.d.

Olushola. J.A. Ancient Ijebu-Ode, Abiodun Press, Ibadan, 1968

Omer-Cooper.,J. Owu in Yoruba History, Ibadan University Press, 1971.

A. Olorunfunmi Oshiga: Foreword to "Iwe Orin Mimo ti Idapo Isin Adulawo", Dec. 1933.

- - Iwe Adura ti a ko jo po ninu Adura ti Orunmila Mimo Woli (56pp.) Oct. 20, 1934 Adulawo, Apa keji

- - Adura Mimo ti Orunmila (80 pp.), Aug. 31, 1935.

- - Iwe Adura Mimo ti Ijo Orunmila Adulawo li Ede Ile Yoruba, n.d. 3rd ed.

- - Iwe Ibada wa Ile Omo Adulawo Sinu Isin Ibile, tabi Alaye nipa Ibere Isin Oyinbo ati ti Larubawa. (46 pp.), Aug. 1936, Anu Oluwa Press, 32 Breadfruit street, Lagos. Atunse kini, 8/12/41.

- - "The Revised Constitution of the Ijo Orunmila Adulawo since the year 1939" (64pp)

- - Iwe Ikilo ati Ibawi (ati alaye nipa Isin Orunmila ati ti Jesu ati Mohodu (Apa Keji) May 1936. Dec. 1941.

- - Iwe Owe ti Ile Yoruba ati ilu Adulawo miran. General Press, Lagos 1938

- - Iwe Ikilo ati Ibawi ati Owe Ile Yoruba, Nov. 1942 .

- - Iwe Orin Mimo ti Ijo Orunmila Adulawo. Afikun Apa Kerin 1/11/39. Nos. 302-385. Akiyesi ati Ijuba by A.O. Osiga.

Parrinder, E.G. The Story of Ketu, University of Ibadan Press, 1962.

Peel. J.D.Y. Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba, O.U.P. 1968.

Prince, Raymond, Ifa, Yoruba Divination and Sacrifice Ibadan, 1964.

- - "Indigenous Yoruba Psychatry", Ari Kiev(ed), Magic, Faith and Healing, London, 1965.

Ryder, A.F.C. Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, Longmans 1969.

Smith, R.S. Kingdoms of the Yoruba, Methuen, London, 1969.

Sowande, Fela. Ifa, Forward Press, Yaba East, n.d. (1964?)

Soyinka, Wole, "The Fourth Stage (Through the Mysteries of Ogun to the Origin of Yoruba Tragedy") published as ch. 10. in D.W. Jefferson (ed), The Morality of Art. London 1964

Talbot. P.A. The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Oxford, 1926.

Taylor, Richard, "Ogun Onire", Nigerian Magazine No. 114, 1974, p.57.

Wescott, R.W. "Did the Yorubas come from Egypt?". Odu, Ibadan, No. 4, n.d.

Willet, Frank , African Art, Thames and Hudson, London, 1967.

B. Social Anthropological Study of Religion.

Abrahamson, Hans. The Origin of Death: Studies in African Mythology Studia Ethnorgraphica Upsaliensia, Upsala, 1951.

Arinze, F. A., Sacrifice in Ibo Religion; Ibadan, 1970.

Baird, Robert D. Category Formation And the History of Religions, Mouton, The Hague, 1971.

Beattie, John Other Cultures: Aims, Methods and Achievements in Social Anthropology, Routledge Paberback, 1966 (first published 1964).

Brill, E. J. "Monotheism and Pantheism in Africa", Journal of Religion in Africa, Leiden, Vo. 3, 1970

Brow, Robert, Religion, Origins and Ideas, Tyndale Press, London, 1966.

Daneel, M.L. The God of Matopo Hills, Mouton & Co, The Hague, 1970a

- - Zionism and Faith-Healing in Rhodesia Moution & Co, The Hague, 1970b.

Danquah, J. B. The Akan Doctrine of God, Lutterworth Press, London, 1944

Dickson K., and Ellingworth, P., Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs: Lutterworth Press, London, 1969.

Dorson, Richard M. African Folklore, Indiana University Press, 1972.

Douglas, Mary. Purity and Danger, Pelican, 1970.

Durkheim. Emile. The Elementary Forms of the Religious life Allen & Unwir, London, 1913.

Edwards, Adrian C.S.Sp., "The Study of Religion in West Africa 1959-69" Religion: Journal of Religion and Religions Vol. 111/1, 1972.

Elwin, Verrier. Tribal Myths of Orissa, O.U.P., 1954.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. Nuer Religion, O.U.P., 1956.

- - Theories of Primitive Religion, O.U.P, 1965.

Fedotov. G.P. The Russian Religious Mind, Harper &oRow, eNew York, 1966 (1960 Edition)

Fernandez, J., "African Religious Movements-Types and Dynamics", The Journal of Modern African Studies 2/4, 1964.

Firth, Raymond, Symbols: Private and Public, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1973.

" (ed.) Man and Culture, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1957

Fortes, M. Oedipus and Job in West African Religion, Cambridge, 1959

Frazer, J. and T. H. Gasten, The New Golden Bough, Criterion Books, New York, 1959.

Frobenius, Leo, African Genesis, New York 1937.

Gough, Kathleen. "Anthropology: Child of Imperialism" in Monthly Review, Vol. 19, no. II.

Hadfield, Robert, "The Folk Society", The American Journal of Sociology, 52, January, 1947.

Herskovits, Melville& Frances, Dahomean Narratives, Northwestern University Press, 1958.

Horton, Robin, "The Klabari World-views: An Outline and interpretation. Africa, XXXII/3, 1962a.

- - "High God: A Comment on Father O'Connell's Paper", Man, September 1962b. no. 219.

- - "African Traditional Thought and Western Science". Africa, XXXXVII/1 1967, p. 52.

" "African Conversion", Africa, XLI/2, 1971, pp. 85-108

Idowu, E, B. African Traditional Religion: A Definition, S. C. M. Press, 1973

Ilogu, E. C. O., Christianity and Ibo Culture, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1974

Kirk, G. S. Myth, Its Meaning and functions in Ancient and Other Cultures, Cambridge, 1970.

LaFontaine, J. S. (ed.), The Interpretation of Ritual, Tavistock, London, 1971.

Lienhardt, Godfrey, The Second Malinowski Lecture, 1961.

- - Divinity and Experience, O. U. P., 1961.

Malefijt, Annemarie de Waal. Religion and Culture: An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion, Collier-Macmillan, London 1968.

Malinowaski, B., Myth in Primitive Psychology, New York, 1926.

" "Malinowski and the study of Kinship" in Firth. R. (ed.), Man and Culture, 1957

Mbiti, J. B. Concepts of God in Africa, SPCK, London, 1970.

Miner, Horace, "The Folk-Urban Continuum", American Sociolcrical Review, Vol. 17, October 1952.

Murphree, Marshall J. Christianity and the Shona, O. U. P. 1969.

Nadel, S. F. Nupe Religion, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1954.

Nottingham, Elizabeth, Religion and Society, Random House, New York, 1954.

O'Connell, J. "The Withdrawal of the High God in West African Religion: An Essay in Interpretation", in Man May, 1962, No. 109

Onoge, O. F. "The Counterrevolutionary Tradition in African Studies: The Case of Applied Anthropology", The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social studies, Vo. 15, No. 3 November, 1973.

Otto, Rudolf. The Idea of the Holy, English translation, O. U. P. London. 1958.

Parrinder, West African Religion Epworth Press, London, 1949

- - West African Psychology, Lutterworth, 1951.

- - Religion in an African City, O. U. P., 1953.

- - Religion in Africa, Penguin, 1969.

- - African Traditional Religion, Hut Chinson, London, 1954 and 1962.

Parsons, Anne, Belief, Magic and Anomie: Essays in Psychosocial Anthropology, Free Press, New York, 1969

Pauw, B. A. Religion in a Tswana Kingdom O. U. P. 1960.

Petterson, Olof. Chiefs and Gods: Religious and Social Elements in the South Eastern Bantu Kingship, Studia Theologica Ludensia, Lund, 1953.

Robertson, Roland, Sociology of Religion, Penguin, 1969.

Sjoberg, G., "Folk and Feudal Societies", The American Journal of Sociology, Vo. LVIII. November 1952.

Smith, E.W. African Ideas of God, Edinburgh House Press, 1950.

Smith, W. Robertson, Religion of the Semites, A. & C. Black, London, 1894.

Taylor, J. V., The Primal Vision, SCM Press, London, 1963.

Temples, Placide, Bantou Philosophy, Presence Africaine, Parie, 1952:

Thomas, Keith, Religion and the Decline of Magic, Weidenfield and Nicolson, London, 1971.

Trechrenberg, J., Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion, Atheneum, New York, 1970.

Turner, V. W., The Drums of Affliction, O. U. P., 1968.

Waterhouse, E. S. The Dawn of Religion, Epworth Press, London, 1936.

Welbourn, F. B. Atoms and Ancestors, Arnold, 1968.

- - "A Note on Types of Religious Society" in C. G. Baeta (ed) 1968.

- - "Some Problems of African Christianity: Guilt and Shame", C. G. Baeta (ed.), 1968.

Werne, Alice. Myths and Legends of the Bantu, Harrap, London 1932

Williamson, S.G. Akan Religion and the Christian Faith O.U.P. 1965.

Wilson, B.R. "A Typology of Sects in a dynamic and comparative perspective", in Roland Robertson (ed.) Sociology of Religion, Penquin, 1969.

Wilson, G. and M. Analysis of Social Change, Cambridge, 1945.

Wilson, M. Religion and the Transformation of Society, Cambridge, 1971.

Yinger, Milton, J. Religion, Society and the Individual, Macmillan, 1957.

C. Christian History and Theology

Aulen, Gustav. Christus Victor, Macmillan, New York, 1931.

- - The Faith of the Christian Church, Muhlenberg, 1948.

Ayandele, E. A. The Missionary Impact on Mordern Nigeria, 1842-1914 Longmans, 1966.

- - Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African Nationalism, 1836-1917, Frank Cass, London, 1970.

Baeta, C. G. Christianity in Tropical Africa, O.U.P. 1968.

Baillie, D.M. Faith in God and its Christian Consummation, Faber & Faber, London 1927/1964.

Balmer, W.T. A Catechism of Christian Experience, Atlantis Press, London, 1924.

Barrett, D. Schism and Rewneval in Africa, O.U.P., 1968

Bane, Martin, J., The Popes and Western Africa: An Outline of Mission History, 1460-1960, Alba House, Station Island, New York, 1968.

Bleeker, C. J., Christ in Modern Athens, Mowbrays, London, 1966.

Bruce, F. F. Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1974.

Caird, G. B. Principalities and Powers, Oxford, 1956.

Cave, Sydney. The Christian Estimate of Man, Cuckworth, London, 1944.

- - The Christian Way, Nisbet, London, 1949. CMS Orin Mimo, Lagos, 1899.

Cochrane, Charles, Christianity and Classical Culture, O.U.P. New York, 1940.

Cone, James, A Black Theology of Liberation J. B. Lippincott Company, New York, 1970.

Cross, F. L. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church O. U. P. , 1958.

Corwther, Adjai Samuel, Experience with Heathens and Mohammedans in West Africa, S.P.C.K., London, 1892.

Dickson, K. and Ellingworth, P., Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, Lutterworth Press, London, 1969.

Edwards, D. L. Religion and Change, Hodder and Stoughton, 1969.

Eichrodt, W., Man in the Old Testament, SCM Press, London, 1951.

Elliott-Binns, L.E. English Thought: 1860-1900, The Theological Aspect, Longmans, London, 1956.

Evans, C.F., The Beginning of the Gospel.... Four Lectures on St. Mark's Gospel, SPCK 1968

Firbairn, A. M., Studies in Religion and Theology, 1910,

Farrer, Austin "Faith and Speculation", 1967.

Fosdick, H. E. The Meaning of Prayer, SCM Press, 1934

Freeman, T. B., Ms Journal (MMS Archives)

- - "Reminiscences and Incidents..."

Gore, Charles, Belief in God, John Murray, London, 1921.

Grant, R. M. Gnosticism and Early Christianity, Revised edition, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1959, 1966.

Groves, C. P. Jesus Christ and Primitive Need: A Missionary Study in the Christian Message, Epworth Press, London, 1934

Harrison, R. K., Introduction to the Old Testament Tyn dale Press London, 1970.

Hayward, V.E. (ed.), African Independent Church Movements, Edinburgh House Press, London 1963,

Ishola, A. A., A General Outline of the Brotherhood Religion, Lagos 1924.

- - Our Doctrines and Objects, Lagos, 1926.

July, R.W. The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its Development in West African during the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, Faber & Faber, London, 1968.

Kaufmann, Y., The Religion of Israel, E.T. 1960.

Kee, Allistair, The Way of Transcendence, Pelican, 1971.

Knight, W., Memoirs of Henry Venn,

- - The Missionary Secretariat of Henry Venn, 1880.

Kraemar, Hendrick, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, London, 1938.

Laroche, R., "Some Traditional African Religions and Christianity", C. G. Baeta (ed) 1968.

Longenecker, Richard N. The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity, S. C. M. Studies in Biblical Theology, Second series no. 17, London, 1970.

Lucas, J. O., The Lagos 'Keswick' Convention - Souvnir of the Golden Jubillee Celebration, Lagos, 1962.

Mackintosh, H., Divine Initiative, SCM Press, London.

Malanchthon, Phillip. Loci Communes, Plitt-Kolde edition, 1900.

Nock, A.D. Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Background, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1964 (Part I published in 1928, Part III in 1952).

Oesterly and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, Its Origin and Development, SPCK, 1930.

Osiga, A. O., Iwé Adura ati Orin Mimo ti Ijo Orunmila Adulawo ni ohun Orin Ede Ile Yoruba, Lagos 1958.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Jesus, God and Man, S.C.M., London, 1968.

Paton, David, (ED.), Reform of the Ministry: A Study in the work of Roland Allen, Lutterworth Press, London 1968.

Peel, J.D.Y. Aladura, A Religious Movement among the Yoruba, O.U.P. 1968.

Sanders, J.I. The New Testament Christological Hymns: Their Historical Religious Background, Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Schuyler S.J.,J.B. "Conceptions of Christianity in the Context of Tropical Africa: Nigerian Reactions to its Advent", C.G. Baeta (ED.), 1968.

Selwyn, E.G. (ed.) Essays Catholic and Critical, SPCK, London, 1926.

Setiloane Gabriel, "How the Traditional World-View Persists in the Christianity of The Sotho-Tswana" (Paper for the Jos Conference on Christianity in independent Africa, 1975).

Smith C. Ryder, The Bible Doctrine of Salvation, Epworth Press, London, 1941.

Tillich, Paul. The New Being, Scribner's, New York, 1955. The Theology of Culture. O.U.P., New York, 1964. Systematic Theology, vol. 1, Chicago, 1951.

Sundkler, Bengt, Bantu Prophets in South Africa, Revised edition, O.U.P., 1961.

Tucker, Miss. Abeokuta or Sunrise Within the Tropics (An Outline and progress of the Yoruba Mission), London, 1853.

Turner, H.W. Profile Through Preaching, Edinburgh House Press, London, 1965.

- - African Independent Church, vols. 1&2, Oxford, 1967.

Vidler, Alec R. The Church in an Age of Revolution, 1789 to the present day, Pelican, 1961.

Warren, Max, Problems and Promises in Africa Today, Hodder and Stoughton, 1964.

W.C.C., Geneva, A Tent-Making MinistryL Towards a More Flexible Form of Ministry 1962

Webster, J.B., The African Churches Among the Yoruba, 1888-1922, O.U.P., 1964.

Welbourn, F.B., East African Christian, O.U.P., 1965.

Wiles, Maurice (ed.), Providence, SPCK, 1969.

Wilson, H.S., Origins of West African Nationalism, Macmillan, London, 1969.